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# THE UK FITNESS REPORT – 2025/26 GYM STATISTICS

Monday, 8 December 2025

UK Fitness Report



Welcome to the PureGym UK Fitness Report! This is the fourth edition of our annual report which takes an in-depth look at how the nation feels about health and fitness, the gym and goals for the year ahead. We've been keeping track of the data since [2022](#), so we also look at how these attitudes and behaviours change over time.

As a low-cost gym provider, we're aware our audience may not be representative of the entire nation, especially from areas where we don't currently have a gym. To ensure our research is robust, accurate, and genuinely useful, we have used multiple data sources in addition to our internal data, including YouGov, Google, and a nationally representative independent survey of over 2,000 people.

In addition to data insights, we've sought out advice and recommendations from a range of industry experts including personal trainers, the [British Heart Foundation](#) and [Andy's Man Club](#), to help us unpick what this data actually means for people in the UK, and provide some helpful tips and advice for those looking to improve their health and fitness.

Ready to get into it? Let's go!

**What the report covers:**

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## Summary:

Now in its fourth year, our annual UK Fitness Report has returned once again to take a closer look at the nation's relationship with health, exercise, and wellbeing, and how our attitudes have changed over the years.

It's clear that our desire as a nation to be healthy is as strong as ever, even if our intentions and actions don't quite match up along the way. While three quarters (76%) of people aspire to be fit, just under half (48%) exercise on a regular basis, with only 3 in 10 of those meeting the government recommended activity guidelines. However, there is steady progress being made, with the percentage of people who don't consider themselves healthy dropping from 22% to 21% over the past year. Younger adults in particular are continuing to show a keen interest in leading a healthy lifestyle, particularly when it comes to elements like hydration and nutrition, indicating that the new generations may be carrying healthier habits with them into the future.

Though the past year has brought positive improvements to our health as a nation, with fewer people saying that they feel unhealthy and more people aspiring to become healthier over the year ahead, some barriers continue to prevent more people from exercising on a regular basis. For 17% of people, it's simply a dislike of exercise, while for others, blockers like 'gymtimidation' are

again on the rise, particularly among women, highlighting the importance of gyms providing a safe and welcoming environment.

For those who exercise regularly, the benefits are clear; people reference improved mood, energy, and confidence as some of the many benefits they get from movement. The gains go beyond just the physical and mental benefits too. Our research shows how gyms truly can become a key social space; many gym goers say they've made friends through fitness which has helped them to stay consistent with their routines.

Of course, the wider landscape also influences our relationship with fitness, with the cost of living continuing to affect how much we feel we can spend on fitness. Technology, particularly the rise of AI, has also altered how we learn, train, and track our workouts. More people than ever are using technology to support their fitness, with a third now going as far as to use AI to create fully personalised fitness and nutrition plans.

New for this 2025/26 report, our personal trainer spotlight explores how the role of PTs goes far beyond advising on workouts and sees them play a part in a wider healthcare system in their own right.

We couldn't forget our trend forecast either, where we uncover the fitness trends that could be taking the lead for 2026 – if you want to take a look at our predictions of what's hot for the next year, as well as all the in-depth insight on the state of the nation's fitness, keep reading to find out more.

To read our previous reports, visit:

- [The UK Fitness Report – 2022/23](#)
- [The UK Fitness Report – 2023/24](#)
- [The UK Fitness Report – 2024/25](#)

## How we feel about our health in 2025/26

### Key Findings

- 76% of people say they 'aspire' to be fit and healthy
- However, 63% of people feel they don't look after their health as much as they should (-2% from 2024)
- 21% of the population don't consider themselves to be healthy at all

- 26% of 35-to-44-year-olds don't consider themselves to be healthy at all, more than any other age group
- 54% of 25-to-34-year-olds consider themselves to be physically healthy, the only age group where more than half feel this way
- Women are more likely to consider themselves as unhealthy (23%) than men (20%)
- 34% of people want to improve their sleep quality
- 32% of people want to improve their energy levels, followed by 29% that want to improve their mental health

While many of the metrics we track as part of this annual report have changed year-on-year, one thing has stayed the same: the majority of Brits want to be fit and healthy. More than three quarters (76%) of UK adults cite this as a goal – a number which has remained unchanged for the past three years. But with everything from the [increasing cost of living](#) to the influx of [weight loss jabs](#) impacting our relationship with food and fitness, have people's actions aligned with this aspiration to be fit and healthy?

Despite four years of data showing that people want to be fit and healthy, there's still a large gap between the desire to be healthy and the act of improving our health. Nearly two thirds (63%) of us still feel we don't look after our health enough, with only marginal improvements in this figure over time – a total of 3% since [2023](#), 2% of which was in the last year alone.

Our research also looked at how many people don't consider themselves to be healthy at all, from a physical, mental, emotional, and social points-of-view. Although only making incremental gains, the number of people who feel this way has decreased with 21% of people feeling this way as of November 2025 compared to 22% at the end of 2024. The improvements may be small, but it shows an encouraging picture.

This number varies across age: those aged 55 to 64 are the only age group who have seen an increase in the percentage of people saying they don't feel healthy in any sense, although this change is only very marginal. Overall, those aged 25-34 have seen the biggest change, with an almost 2% decrease in the number of people saying they don't class themselves as healthy at all.

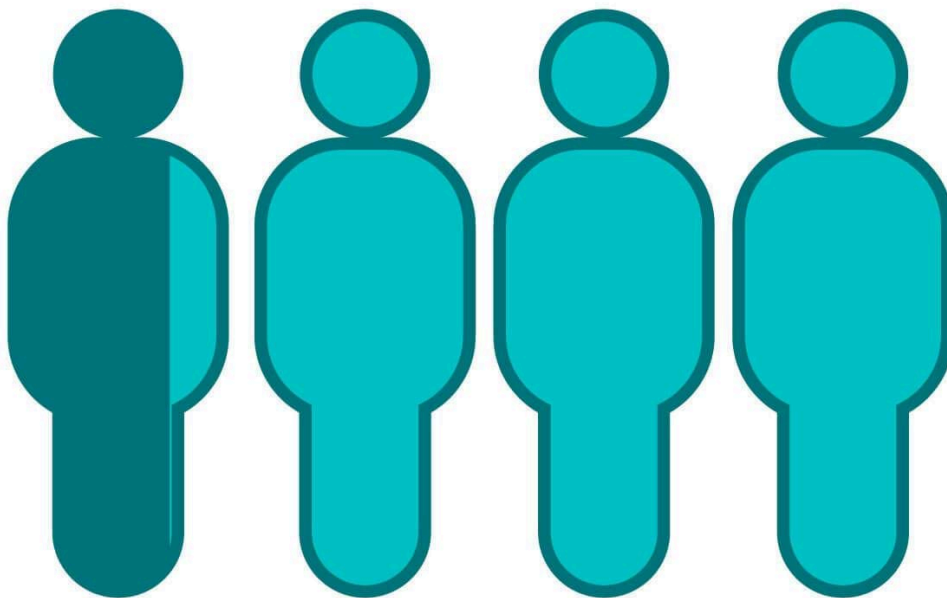
The gender disparity from previous reports remains, with women still slightly more likely to consider themselves as unhealthy (23%) compared with men (20%). It's hard to know whether this is due to actual health differences,

perceived health differences, or a mixture of the two, but either way the numbers do show a sustained feeling of unhappiness regarding health issues in females.

## How Healthy do People Feel in 2025/26?

**21%** of people don't consider themselves to be healthy at all

This includes from a mental, physical, emotional or social point of view



The age group that considers themselves to be the least healthy is 35-44 year olds, with 26% not considering themselves to be healthy at all

More women consider themselves to be unhealthy than men (23% vs. 19% men)

Source: YouGov survey – Sept 2025



While our new data shows that things seem to be slowly moving in the right direction and that we're collectively feeling healthier than we did at the end of last year, there are clearly still areas that are holding the nation back.

## What areas of health and fitness do people want to improve?

We asked people to pick out the key areas where they feel their health could improve the most and interestingly, the top five has had huge changes since this time last year. Mental health and strength have remained a top priority, but the percentage of those aiming to improve cardiovascular fitness, flexibility and mobility have decreased. These have been replaced by sleep quality (the area most people now want to improve), energy levels, and core strength.

## Top 5 Areas People Want To Improve

- 1 Sleep quality: 34%
- 2 Energy levels: 32%
- 3 Mental health: 29%
- 4 Overall strength: 24%
- 5 Core strength: 22%

Without giving too much away, later on (or [jump there now if you can't wait](#)) we discuss how fatigue, energy levels and stress are the three biggest challenges currently faced by Brits when it comes to fitness, so this new list of focus areas makes a lot of sense in the context of what we're all currently feeling.

Just half of the population (50%) say they feel mentally healthy, with a further 13% of the population rating their mental health as 'poor', so it's also no surprise this came out as a key area that people want to improve.

With mental health and exercise going hand-in-hand, this is a topic we will be exploring throughout our report and have some great commentary on the subject from \*\*Lucas Whitehead, Head of Marketing & Partnerships at [Andy's Man Club](#)\*\* in our sections on [why people are exercising](#), [why people aren't exercising](#), and [socialising at the gym](#).

## How to improve strength

1 in 4 people (24%) say that strength is an area they need to improve on, with those aged 25 to 34 most keen to build on this area as a whole. Breaking this down based on muscle groups, core strength is the area that most people feel



they can improve (22%), with 18% keen to improve upper body strength and 13% lower body strength.

Whichever area you're looking to improve, we have plenty of free workout guides to help:

- [Core workouts and exercises](#)
- [Arms and shoulders workouts and exercises](#)
- [Legs and glutes workouts and exercises](#)

It's important to note that for those who are able to, people should be training all muscle groups and movement patterns – even if one area is a higher priority, be that for aesthetics, sports performance, or another reason. The body is designed to function as a whole, both in day-to-day life, and in the gym. Training for bigger biceps or glutes may seem important now but in the long run, well-rounded training helps to address muscular imbalances that can cause poor posture, pain, and injuries, while building strength, mobility, balance, and coordination that leads to higher performance in the short term and a better quality of life in the long term.

If you tend to gravitate towards training the same muscle groups repeatedly (we know, leg day isn't a favourite for most people), why not take a look at the workouts on the [PureGym app](#) to give you some inspiration, or follow our [workout plan for gaining muscle](#) to add more structure to your exercise.

## The current state of fitness in the UK

### Key Findings:

- 48% of people currently exercise in the UK
- 63% of people aged 18-to-24-years old exercise, the highest of all age groups
- London continues to be the region where people exercise the most (60%)
- The East of England is the region where people exercise the least (40% of people here currently exercise)
- Only around 3 in 10 people who exercise meet the government recommended levels of weekly 'moderate' activity
- 61% of adults who exercise are completing two strength-focused sessions per week, in line with government guidelines

- 68% of people in the UK suffer with fatigue

2 in 5 (21%) don't consider themselves healthy at all, but what does this look like when it comes to exercise?

Just under half (48%) of people in the UK say they are currently exercising, a number which has remained unchanged since 2024 following a 3% growth from the year before.

One area that has changed since last year's report is Gen Z's exercise habits. While Millennials led the way in 2024, this year Gen Z have taken the lead as the nation's biggest exercisers (63% of people aged 18 to 24), followed closely by millennials (61%). The figure for Gen Z has risen by 2%, a small increase which shows an encouraging movement by younger generations towards living a healthier lifestyle. This echoes trends across the world, with this year's [Future of Wellness Trends Survey](#) by McKinsey reporting that nearly 30% of Gen Zers and millennials in the USA are prioritising wellness "a lot more" than one year ago.

However, at the other end of the spectrum, those aged 65+ exercise the least, with just under a third (32%) of people in this age group saying they work out - leaving a huge 68% who don't. Overall, the percentage of those who work out decreases steadily from the peak among 18-to-24-year-olds, with 59% of those aged 55-to-64-years-old not working out, and half (50%) of those aged 45-to-54-years-old.

Age isn't the only demographic that show differences in exercise, though - location has an impact too.

## Where in Britain exercises the most?

Like last year, [London](#) over-indexes on exercise when compared to the rest of the country. Though 48% of Brits exercise overall, London's average sits 12% above this with 60% of residents working out on a regular basis. The nation's capital also continues to be the only region in the UK where over half of the population are exercising.

With a high density of gyms, boutique studios, and a vast array of other activities to choose from, Londoners are much more likely to have access to

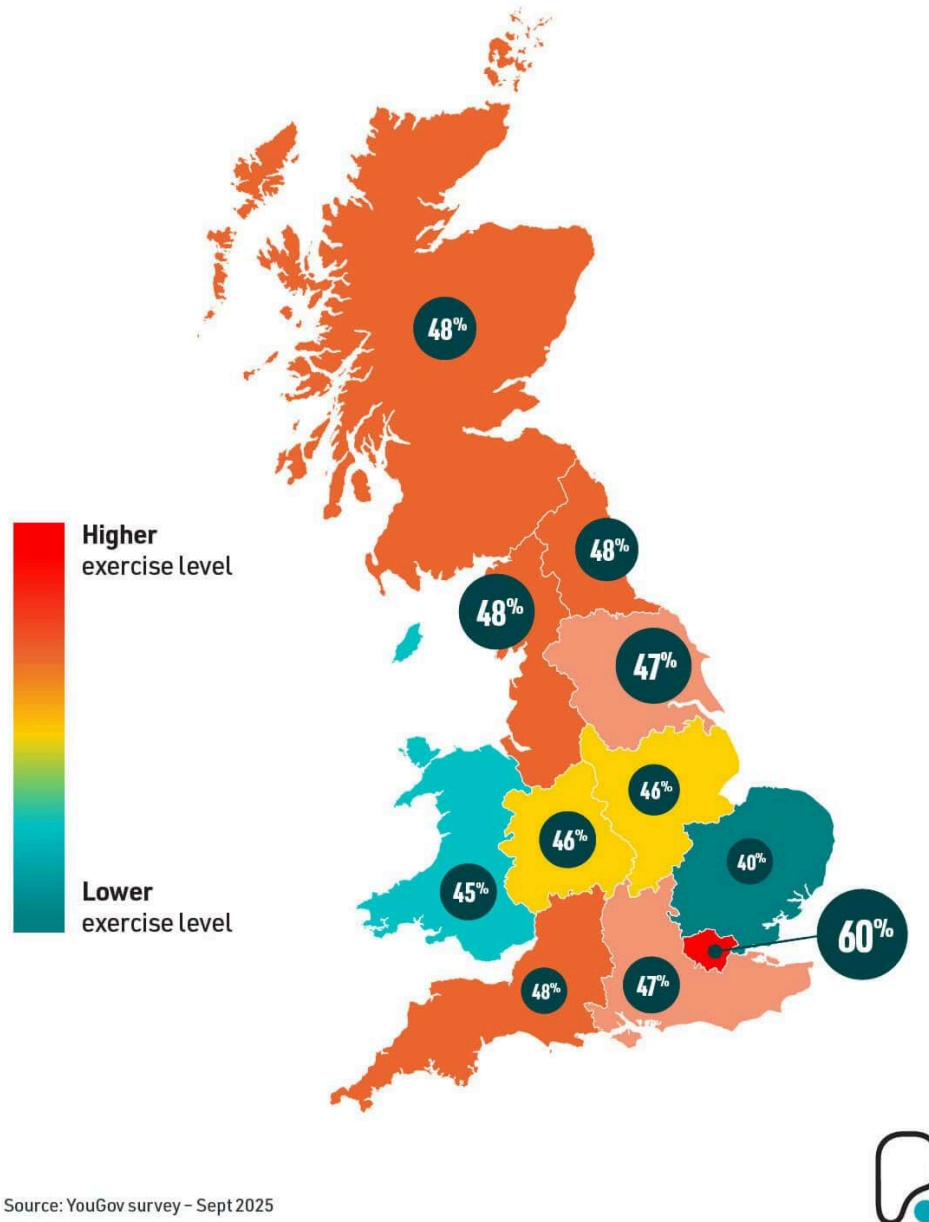


fitness in a way that suits their budget, routine or preferences compared to other areas of the country. However, the capital also has a higher proportion of those with higher incomes, which may make cost less of a limiting factor than in other areas – while many people also opt to turn their commute into a workout, by cycling, running or walking.

The South West, North East, North West, and Scotland are in line with the national average, with 48% of residents exercising. The South East sits just below at 47%, taking it from second place (in 2024) to seventh. Everywhere else falls below 48%, with the East of England ranking lowest; just 40% of those living here exercise.

# Where Exercises The Most?

% of local population that say they exercise



## Do we meet UK government recommended levels of exercise?

The government has long set the following guidelines for the minimum amount of exercise that is recommended for people aged between 19 and 64 years old, with these available to view on the [NHS website](https://www.nhs.uk/physicalactivity/physicalactivityguidelines/):

- Strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) on at least 2 days a week

- At least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity a week or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity a week, Spread exercise evenly over four to five days a week, or every day
- Reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity

The guidelines also state that 'weekly activity targets' can be achieved by several short sessions of very vigorous intensity activity, or a mix of moderate, vigorous, and very vigorous activity.

With less than half of people exercising at all, are those of us that *are* working out hitting the recommended levels? Unfortunately, the answer is overwhelmingly no. Our research found that only 3 in 10 people (31%) who exercise regularly meet the moderate intensity target, while a slightly smaller number (28%) manage to hit the vigorous intensity target.

Moderate intensity exercise includes activities like [riding a bike](#), hiking, brisk walking, or dancing, while vigorous activity should make you breathe fast, such as [running](#), swimming fast laps, or playing a sport such as football, netball or hockey.

However, it's not just the intensity of exercise that counts. An ideal fitness routine should include a variety of different activities that help us become healthier in multiple ways, such as strength training. The NHS recommends that adults complete at least two strength-focused exercise sessions a week, which more than 3 in 5 of those who exercise (61%) are managing to include in their routines.

With so many Brits who exercise still falling short of the recommended activity levels, we asked **Anna Hamilton, Assistant Gym Manager from [PureGym Craigavon](#)** to share some tips on how gym-goers can ensure they're hitting a sufficient amount of each exercise type:

"For a person who goes to the gym three times per week, which is a good frequency to aim for, I'd recommend that you do two strength sessions and one HIIT circuit style session each week. As well as strength sessions being good to help you see progress in the gym, they'll also help you to strengthen the muscles that support your joints, which is something we all need. For this exercise frequency, I'd recommend keeping both of the strength sessions as full body days to make the most out of hitting each muscle group.

"For the HIIT session, I would suggest doing a good cardio-focused circuit such as:

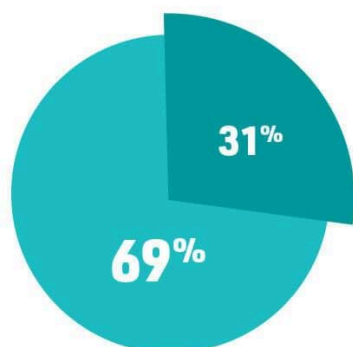
**5 rounds of:**

- **150m ski erg**
- **150m row**
- **30 seconds assault bike**

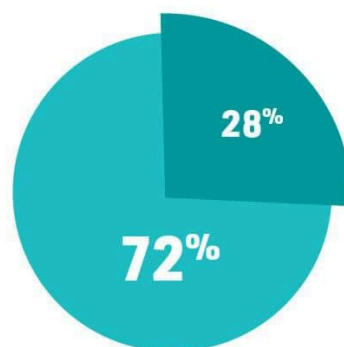
**Finisher - 3x rounds of 30 seconds each per exercise:**

- **Russian twists**
- **Dead bug**
- **Weighted sit ups**
- **Plank dips**
- **Bicycle"**

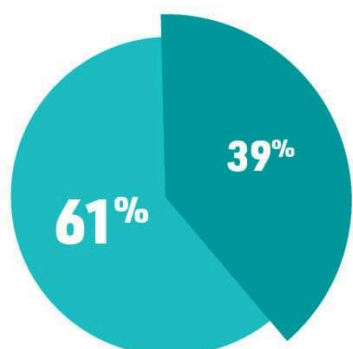
## How many regular exercisers meet the NHS's exercise recommendations?



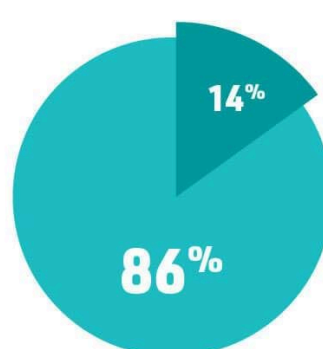
Regular exercisers who do at least 150+ minutes of 'moderate intensity' activity per week



Regular exercisers who do at least 75+ minutes of 'very vigorous' activity per week (NHS recommendation: several sessions)



Regular exercisers who spend 45+ minutes on strength training per week (NHS recommendation: 2 sessions/week)



Percentage of 25-34-year-olds that do some form of strength exercise each week



Does meet NHS exercise recommendations



Does not meet NHS exercise recommendations

Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

Since there's still a long way to go until people are hitting the recommended levels laid out by the government, more education around why exercise is such a pivotal part of good cardiovascular health is needed. We'll discuss more on the wide-ranging benefits of exercise shortly, but **Emily McGrath, Senior Cardiac Nurse** from the [British Heart Foundation](#) explains why this is such a concern for public health, and why it might be that we're not hitting those levels:

"It is concerning that individuals are struggling to meet the national guideline recommendation and could indicate people are unaware of how important it is for their health. It is always very important for people to be aware of their individual risk factors and look at ways to improve their heart health.

"Some people find it difficult to fit exercise into their everyday routine, lack motivation and energy. There is also a misconception that exercise is expensive, but that is simply not true. In fact, you can do most exercise for free and without having to create additional time to do so. This could be achieved by walking with friends or getting off the bus at an earlier stop and walking."

Having guidelines for recommended activity levels is incredibly important; they give people something to aim for and can be particularly helpful for those who don't know where or how to start. However, for those who aren't hitting the recommendations, they can seem daunting. We firmly believe that when it comes to exercise, anything is better than nothing. Even just 10 minutes a week can make a difference and act as a stepping stone to more activity, especially as starting is often the hard part.

Setting SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and consistently working towards these will benefit you more in the long run, rather than setting unrealistic goals you're more likely to give up on. The more you show up for yourself, no matter how small, the more confidence and motivation you'll have to keep going.

## What are people struggling with the most?

On the topic of setting goals, we also asked Brits what they're struggling with the most when it comes to being healthy, to see where the commonalities lie.

### What do people struggle with the most?

- 1 Feeling fatigued - 68%
- 2 Getting enough sleep - 68%
- 3 Coping with stress - 64%
- 4 Back aches/pain - 63%
- 5 Poor flexibility - 63%
- 6 Stiff or tight muscles - 62%
- 7 Snacking too much - 60%
- 8 Walking up a gradient - 59%
- 9 Running a short distance (e.g. to the bus stop) - 58%



- 10 Consuming too many calories - 56%
- 11 Getting up from sitting on the floor - 52%
- 12 Getting out of breath walking upstairs - 46%
- 13 Eating enough protein - 45%
- 14 Recurring injuries such as muscle strains - 42%
- 15 Eating fruit and vegetables every day - 43%
- 16 Drinking water - 38%
- 17 Getting up from the chair/sofa - 36%
- 18 Walking a short distance (e.g. to the shops) - 34%
- 19 Consuming enough calories - 33%
- 20 Moving neck side to side/up and down - 32%

We've already mentioned that over a third of people say that sleep is the area of their health they most want to improve, so it comes as no surprise that so many struggle to get enough of it. More than two thirds (68%) of people say they struggle with fatigue, with a similar number finding it hard to get the recommended eight hours of sleep every night – a stat which has increased by 2% in the last twelve months.

It's not all doom and gloom, though, with other aspects of our collective health seeing positive improvements. Just last year, 38% of the population said they struggled to walk a short distance, a figure which is significantly down this year, to 34%. Looking further back, the improvement in this is even more impressive; when we initially gathered responses to this question in April 2023, almost half the population (47%) said they struggled to walk even a short distance. In the space of two and a half years, a huge 13% of the population have managed to improve their walking ability.

## Why are people exercising in 2025/26?

### Key Findings:

- 56% of people who exercise do so to improve their overall health (+7% from last year)

- 43% of people who exercise do so to improve their mental health (+9% from last year)
- 36% of people who exercise are doing so to feel happier with their appearance (+9% from last year)
- 37% are inspired to start exercising in order to stay fit and healthy as they age
- 13% of people are inspired to exercise due to a health professionals' recommendation
- The main benefits people see from exercise include having more energy, feeling happier, finding their mood has improved and feeling more confident

From having alone time to lowering your blood pressure, everyone has a reason for working out. Setting measurable goals is a proven way to succeed, with research from [Dominican University](#) showing that those who set time-bound goals and track against them weekly are 40% more likely to succeed than those who don't. For those who are looking to become more active and healthier, goal setting can be particularly helpful for enacting longer-term lifestyle changes.

The most common health goal among people in the UK remains unchanged from previous years: simply to improve overall health. What has changed, however, is that this has increased by 7% since last year, with more people than ever wanting to become a healthier version of themselves. In practice, this could take on multiple forms – from feeling less out of breath while walking outdoors, to feeling more supple and mobile, or having more energy.

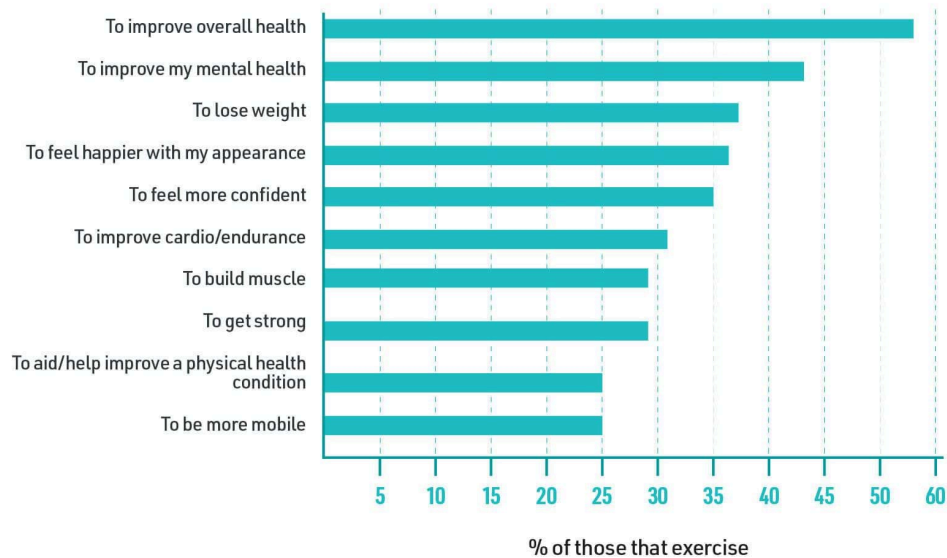
As with other years, the second most common reason people are exercising is for mental health. This has also seen an increase compared with last year, with more than 2 in 5 people (43%) who exercise doing so to reap the positive mental benefits it can bring.

At PureGym, we know that feeling good can take on many forms and is unique for every person. For some, this could be feeling good in how they look. Aesthetic goals have increased in popularity since last year, with more than a third (36%) of people who exercise hoping to feel happier with their appearance because of exercising, a motivating factor which comes in just behind losing weight, which 37% of individuals citing it.

## Why Are People Exercising in 2025/26?



The main reasons why people exercise



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

## What inspires people to start exercising?

The online fitness industry has boomed over the last decade, and while there's no doubt that fitness influencers play a role in how people exercise, they are not necessarily what influences people to *start* working out. There are many factors that influence people to act and increase their exercise levels, beyond what's happening online.

So, what is it that gets people into a [gym class](#), signing up for a [personal trainer](#), or even trying out a [home workout](#)?

## The 10 things that inspire people to exercise the most:

- 1 The desire to stay fit and healthy with age - 37%
- 2 Improved self-esteem and boosted confidence - 33%
- 3 Improving mood or mental health - 29%
- 4 Own awareness of fitness - 25%
- 5 A personal health scare - 15%
- 6 A health professionals' recommendation - 13%
- 7 Wanting to be more active for my children - 13%
- 8 Seeing people I know looking fit or healthy on social media - 11%

- 9 Encouragement for friends – 11%
- 10 A health scare in the family or with a friend – 10%

## What benefits do people see from exercising?

The benefits of exercise are irrefutable, with study after study showing the positive impact it has on our health. Knowing and experiencing the benefits are two different things, and we love to see when the work people put into getting healthier pays off in tangible health benefits, especially when that motivates them to continue increasing their activity levels.

Since the most common ailment Brits say they are experiencing is feeling fatigued, it's great to see that the most common benefit from exercise is having more energy. Over a third (37%) of people said they feel increased energy levels from working out, highlighting just how important exercise can be in reducing fatigue.

Having more energy is a particular benefit for those aged 35 to 44, with 2 in 5 individuals in this age group experiencing less fatigue – above the national average and higher than any other age group. There are a multitude of reasons why this could be the case, one being that this age group typically experiences hormonal shifts that can reduce energy, as well as natural loss of muscle and bone – both areas that exercising helps to protect against. It may also be a cumulative effect of settling into consistent exercise habits over time; research such as this [2022 study](#) have shown that long standing exercise drives significant improvements in fatigue, energy and vitality.

While men are more likely to list having more energy as a result of exercise a benefit (38% versus 34% of women), women see benefits such as losing weight and mood improvement to a larger degree than men (30% of women versus 29% of men and 31% of women versus 29% of men, respectively).

# The Main Benefits of Regular Exercise



How are people in 2025/26 benefitting from exercising regularly?



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

When looking at the rest of the most common benefits of exercise, it's encouraging to see mental health and wellbeing leading the way; 35% of those who exercise regularly say they feel happier, and 30% say their mood has generally improved.

Though the effects of exercise on mood and mental health will, of course, differ for everyone, **\*\*Lucas Whitehead, Head of Marketing & Partnerships at Andy's Man Club \*\***explains that some people could feel the benefits after only one session:

"Speaking personally, I feel the benefit of exercise almost instantly due to the release of endorphins and the opportunity to burn off steam. However, the goals of individuals could also have a bearing on how quickly they feel the mental benefits of exercise. If somebody has a specific fitness goal, then achieving this or getting closer to achieving this can have a tremendous impact on their mental health as well as self-esteem and confidence. It is so important that people set achievable and measurable goals as the feeling of accomplishment as a result of achieving them can be powerful."

Prioritising both good mental and physical health is an important part of living a healthy, active lifestyle, but the benefits of exercise can tiptoe into social health too; gyms have become important third spaces in the UK, which we'll dig into further down the report.

People aged between 25 and 34 benefit the most from making friends through exercise, with 14% saying they've met new acquaintances through fitness. Interestingly, those who meet people at the gym are three times more likely to make friends than those who meet people through exercise outside of the gym environment (15% versus 5%), for example through [running clubs](#) and sports teams. This could be due to the camaraderie of the gym environment, or the time and space for conversations and interactions within the gym setting that is encouraging new friendships to form.

## Why aren't people exercising in 2025/26?

### Key Findings:

- Nearly a third of people (31%) don't exercise because they dislike exercise itself (+11% from last year)
- 17% of people don't exercise because they find it boring
- Physical health conditions prevent 22% of people from exercising, while 10% say their mental health is a barrier
- 12% of people find the gym intimidating (+4% from last year)
- Women are more likely to experience 'gymtimidation' (17%) than men (5%). For women this is up 7% year-on-year, while for men it is down 1%
- Exercising in front of other people is the main reason (79%) that people feel intimidated by the gym (+9% from last year)

For the 52% of the population who don't currently exercise, it's clear that the barriers to exercising outweigh the perceived benefits. The first step to tackling this starts with conversation – if we understand more about the barriers to exercise, we're more likely to find ways to remove them.

As with previous years, the biggest barrier to exercise is that nearly a third (31%) of people do not find it enjoyable, while 17% even find it boring. With so many different ways to keep active, it's more likely that these people have a preconceived belief of what exercise looks like than it is they dislike all forms of exercise.

For these individuals, it's not necessarily about overcoming the fear of the gym or convincing them that going for a run is enjoyable but rather helping them to



find ways to get more movement that provides them with real joy and excitement.

From longstanding ways of working out such as Pilates to the regular influx of new fitness fads we see each year, there are so many fun and exciting ways to move. If you need help discovering new ways to exercise, skip forward to the biggest [fitness trends of 2026](#) to find some inspiration for your next workout!

Disliking exercise is not the only blocker, and some are less easy to find workarounds. Mental health preventing exercise is prevalent, and is higher in younger age groups, such as those aged 25 to 34 and 35 to 44. As many as 30% of those aged between 25 and 34 say their mental health prevents them from exercising, versus only 6% of those aged 55 or over.

However, there is definitely hope for people who find themselves in this position. **Lucas Whitehead from Andy's Man Club** explains:

"Everybody who exercises regularly started off doing so with a degree of anxiety and inexperience, and the experience and assuredness they now display is as a result of repetition. Making the first step is always the most difficult part of starting something new and it is the same when it comes to exercise - things get easier once you take that leap.

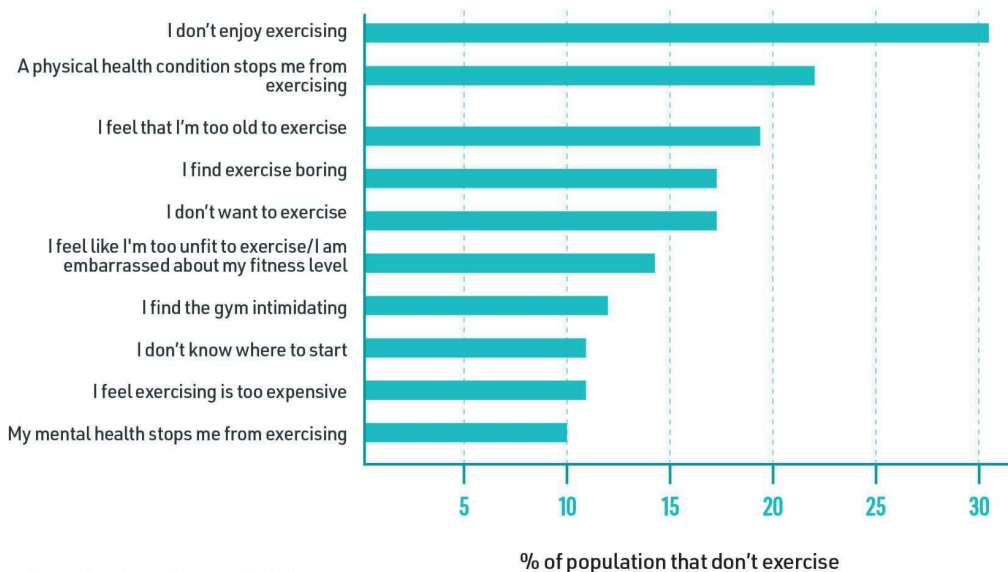
"Also, comparison is the thief of joy, and it is important to remember that seeing other people who seem confident and assured whilst exercising, shouldn't invalidate your own feelings of anxiety when it comes to starting your own activity. When first starting out, try to give yourself achievable goals, and try not to go into anything with unrealistic expectations. Setting yourself a goal of just going into the gym to look around is a great first step, then you could build this up little by little – for example, maybe spending just 10 minutes walking on a treadmill to help yourself get used to the environment and routine, as your first session."

However, age itself is also a prevailing factor, with age-related self-limiting beliefs surging from 11% in 2024 to 19% in 2025: more than a quarter (27%) of over 55 say their age is the reason why they don't exercise. Exercising is important at every age but is especially crucial as we get older. It protects against aging related muscle and bone loss, increases mobility, and improves balance and coordination, protecting against falls and allowing us to stay independent and in good health as we age.

At PureGym, we believe fitness has no age limit – which is something we've proven in the past through the likes of our very own Over 50s Fitness Championships. Head [here](#) to read stories from over 50s on their own fitness journeys, and how they found exercise (and a likeminded community) in later life.

## Why Aren't People Exercising in 2025/26?

The main reasons people don't do any regular exercise



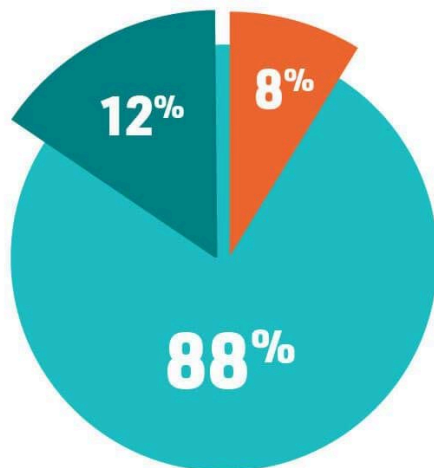
## Are people scared of the gym?

We've been conducting research into the phenomenon of '[gymtimidation](#)' for years now. As a low-cost gym chain where everyone is welcome, understanding just how much a fear of the gym impacts people who want to become more active from doing so helps us to create an environment which reduces this fear.

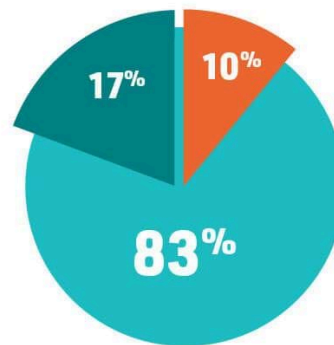
Last year we reported that levels of gymtimidation had decreased significantly, and while it remains relatively low, at just over 1 in 10 individuals, it unfortunately seems to be on the rise again – increasing by 4% since last year.

As always, there is a gender disparity here; women are more likely to find the gym more intimidating than men and three times as likely to experience gymtimidation. Also more likely to face this feeling are younger or middle-aged adults, compared with those aged over 55.

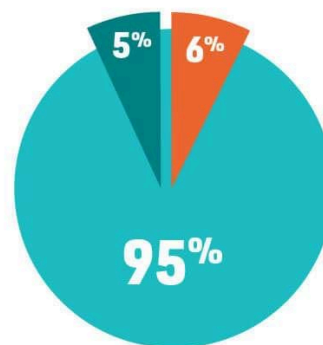
# How Many People Suffer From Gymtimidation?



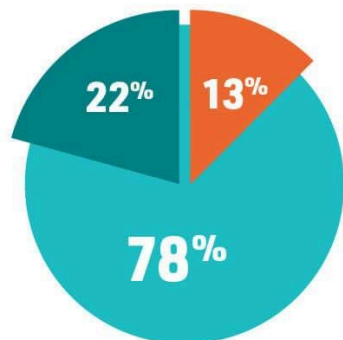
**Overall population**



**Women**

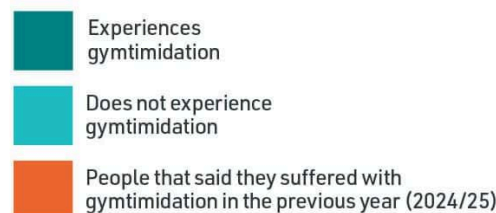


**Men**



**16-24 year olds**

suffer with gymtimidation more than any other age group



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

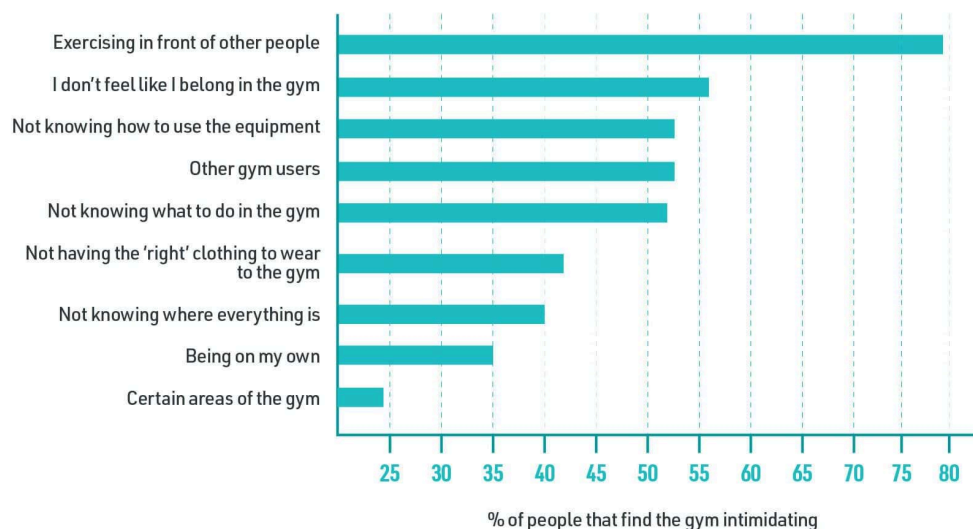
With it being clear that people are still struggling to find their place in the gym, we've continued our research into what causes these fears. Exercising in front of others remains the most common issue, with a huge 4 in 5 people saying they feel uncomfortable working out in the company of the general public. This is followed by not feeling like they belong in the gym (56%) and not knowing how to use the equipment (53%). Though if you're someone that struggles with the latter, we may be able to help. We understand that gyms often use different equipment, so we've created a handy series of [equipment guides](#) to take you step-by-step through the kit in our gyms, so you never have to feel lost again.

Interestingly, *no* men feel intimidated by having to exercise on their own, compared with 42% of women who do – but men do tend to feel slightly more

out of place in the gym compared with women (60% of men versus 56% of women).

Those aged 25-to-34-years-old express the most anxiety about entering the gym, with more than 80% of this age group saying they don't know how to use the equipment, they don't know what to do in the gym, they don't have the right clothing, or that they feel intimidated by certain areas (for example, the free weights section).

## Why do People Suffer From Gymtimidation?



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

However, **Tenzin Harley, Personal Trainer and Yoga Teacher at [PureGym London Holloway Road](#)** explains that while gymtimidation can be an uncomfortable feeling, it's one that is very common, with plenty of ways to try and overcome it:

"Concerns over the cost of living, a stressful news cycle and a lopsided work/life balance leads to people being burnt out and overstimulated. To then step in to the unknown, and equally overstimulating environment of the gym can be one stressor too much for our overworked brains.

"This feeling might be further compounded if, like me, you weren't a particularly sporty child. Being in a gym can feel uncomfortably like being back in a school P.E. class, with everyone watching as you fumble the ball. Whilst your anxiety might be telling you that all eyes are on you in the gym, most people are either

too concerned with their own workout to notice you or might even be feeling the same.

"The best way to combat anxiety, is to have a plan before you enter the gym. We have plenty of workouts on the [PureGym app](#) that can help with this, but it can also be a good idea to research alternative exercises just in case a machine is busy, so you're not completely thrown off track.

"It can also be helpful to find a quiet corner to do your workout, or focus primarily on machines, as these usually have guidance stickers on how to use them. For beginners, a simple sequence of exercise such as the following could be a good place to start:

- **Lat pull down or seated row (upper back/pull)**
- **Chest press or shoulder press (upper body/push)**
- **Leg press or leg extension (lower body)**
- **Hip thrust or hamstring curl (glutes/hamstrings)**

"Ultimately, practise makes perfect, and the more you can show up for yourself, the less intimidating the gym will feel."

If you're intrigued when the gym is at its busiest and quietest to help make going to the gym feel that bit less scary, [head here](#) to find out!

## How, when and how often we work out

### Key Findings:

- The most common exercise frequency among those who work out is 2 to 3 times per week
- Just under a quarter of people who exercise do so four to six times per week (24%)
- The average number of rest days taken per week by those who exercise is 2
- Summer is the most popular time of year for exercise, with almost half (48%) of people doing physical activity during these months
- Winter is the least popular season for physical activity
- Life events such as reaching a milestone age, going through the menopause and retirement are most likely to encourage people to exercise

regularly for the first time

- More challenging periods such as becoming a parent, starting a new job and moving house are all linked to a decrease in exercise levels

Exercise routines are personal to each of us. For some, it may be a struggle to put on the gym clothes just once a week, while for others it may be part of a well-honed daily routine. There is no single right or wrong frequency we should all be aiming for – finding a routine that fits with our wider lifestyles and responsibilities is key. What's achievable for one person may be drastically different to someone else, for example a single parent working two jobs versus someone in their twenties with few responsibilities.

According to data from YouGov, among those who work out, most people are exercising for 30-59 minutes per session (41%). Workouts of 15-29 minutes (20%) and 1 to 1.5 hours (19%) are the next most common, with the number of people working out for any longer than this at a significantly lower level.

Overall, 1 in 4 (25%) people typically workout for less than 30 minutes, while just under a third (32%) work out for an hour or more.

There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to how long a workout should last. Factors like how much time you have available, how much energy you have, and the intensity of the workout all play a part in how long your workout should be. The type of workout will also impact this, and the rise of hybrid training in recent years has highlighted how people don't need to stick to one form of exercise either – one day you may fancy a long, slow run, while another a 15-minute HIIT session may tick the box.

Generally, younger people aged 18 to 24 are most likely to favour longer workouts, with almost 2 in 5 (38%) of this age group working out for an hour or more. On the other end of the scale, those aged 65+ prefer shorter workouts, with almost a third (31%) working out for 30 minutes or less at a time, followed by 30% of 35-to-44-year-olds. However, those aged 65 and over are also among those who are most likely to work out every day, with 11% of people who work out in this age group doing some form of exercise daily.

When it comes to the number of times per week we're working out, 2 to 3 times per week is the most common frequency among those who exercise, with 40% of those who work out doing so. 1 in 4 people (24%) work out four to six times



per week, while 17% of people get in one workout per week and 8% work out every day.

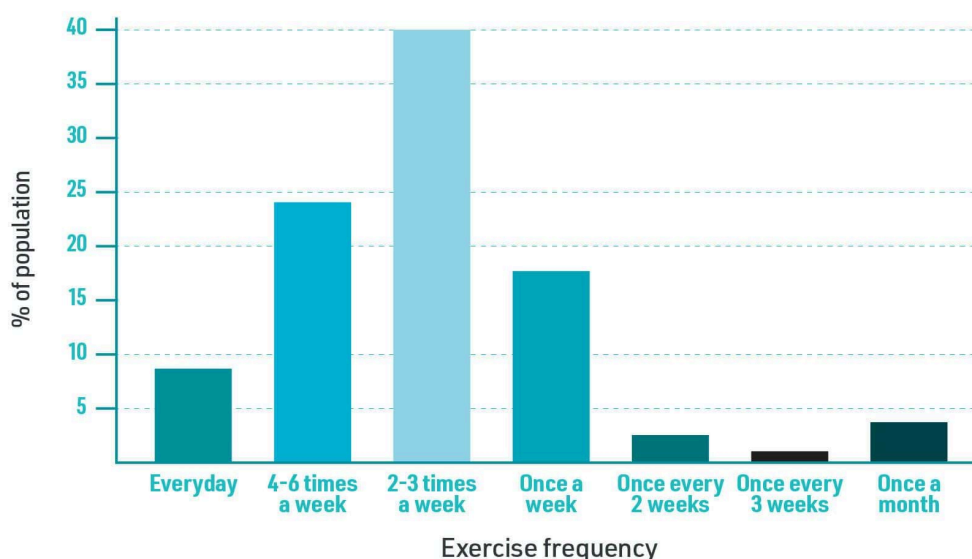
It's no surprise that 2 to 3 times per week is the sweet spot for working out. For many, this is a maintainable level that can fit around other commitments and priorities while still allowing good progress over time. However, for those that are looking to optimise their workout routine to see maximum progress, **Anna Hamilton, Assistant Gym Manager at [PureGym Craigavon](#)** recommends a slightly higher frequency of gym visits:

"In order to see the most progress, you should ideally be going to the gym anywhere between three to five days a week. If you train too little, there isn't enough stimulus there to help you progress quickly enough. However, it is important to make sure you aren't training seven days a week as this doesn't allow enough recovery time for your muscles to grow.

"If you live a busy lifestyle or are a beginner to the gym, then three days is a good number to aim for, but it is important to make sure you maximise your workouts on the days you are training to make sure you see good progress."

## How Often Do People Exercise?

Gym, jog, hyrox or tennis – how often do people exercise?



Source: YouGov survey – Sept 2025

Though the government recommends that we hit certain levels of activity per week, ranging from strengthening exercises to moderate and vigorous activity,

as we touched on [earlier in the report](#), there's ultimately no right or wrong way to work out.

Walking takes the top spot for most popular way to exercise, with 90% of those who exercise doing it on a weekly basis. This is no surprise – walking is a simple way to get movement in, with no warm up or special kit needed, and has the benefit of getting you from A to B, too.

According to our survey, 68% of those who exercise say they workout at home on a weekly basis, with 41% also attending gym classes – highlighting how more people are taking a flexible approach to their fitness, splitting workouts between both the gym and home settings. Running also proves popular, with 52% doing this activity regularly.

There are some clear gender differences in our workout preferences, with women more likely to favour activities such as Pilates (34% of women compared to 30% of men), dancing (14% versus 10%) and yoga (38% versus 36%) compared to their male counterparts who prefer activities such as cycling (54% of men versus 34% of women) and interval workouts (46% versus 32%).

### **The 10 most popular fitness activities among those who exercise:**

- 1 Walking – 90%
- 2 Home workouts – 68%
- 3 Running/jogging - 52%
- 4 Strength training (bodyweights/bands) - 51%
- 5 Strength training (weightlifting) - 51%
- 6 Core training – 49%
- 7 Cycling – 44%
- 8 Attending gym classes – 41%
- 9 Cross trainer – 34%
- 10 Circuit training – 32%

From this list, it's clear that the most popular ways to workout are some of the most well-known ways to work out too. If you don't like more typical ways of

working out, it's easy to see why you would think you don't like any type of workout when looking at this list. The most important thing when it comes to fitness is finding a routine that is sustainable for your individual lifestyle, whether that's home workouts, gym classes, rock climbing, aerial arts, or simply dancing in your kitchen for 30 minutes.

With these varying exercise preferences in mind, **Anna** has also put together a few examples of how a week of workouts could look for those with different focuses, to help give you some inspiration:

### **Running Focused:**

- Monday - Easy Run
- Tuesday - Sprint Interval Runs
- Thursday - HIIT Class Workout
- Friday - Full Body Strength Workout
- Saturday - Long Run
- Sunday - Rest

### **Gym Focused:**

- Monday - Full Body Workout
- Tuesday - Full Body Workout
- Wednesday - Rest
- Thursday - 45 Minute BURN class
- Saturday - HIIT Style Workout
- Sunday - Rest

### **Class Focused:**

- Monday - 45 Minute LIFT Class
- Tuesday - Full Body Workout Session
- Wednesday - 45 Minute GLC
- Thursday - Rest
- Friday - ZUMBA Class
- Saturday - Rest
- Sunday - Pilates

When it comes to keeping fit, it's not just about how much you move. Exercise and sleep are two sides of the same coin; it's just as important to make sure that you're getting good quality rest. Rest and recovery are crucial in becoming fitter

and stronger – the body rebuilds tissue while resting, not while working out. Factoring in recovery time also helps to prevent injury or overtraining, which in turn will make your training more sustainable for the long term.

On average, people who exercise regularly take two rest days per week. However, 1 in 12 people say they never have a rest day, with those in the Baby Boomer generation (those aged 61-to-79-years-old) most likely to agree with this – likely as a result of their preference for quicker daily workouts which require less recovery.

For weight training and intense exercise, it is generally recommended to leave at least a full day between working the same muscle group at a minimum, with at least one full rest day a week. However, everyone's preference and needs for rest will be different depending on the frequency, duration and intensity of their workouts, and listening to your body is often the best way to work this out. If you're still sore from a workout, feeling more tired than normal, finding that your performance is decreased, or you're struggling to sleep, these could all be signs that your body needs some time to recover.

## How do the seasons affect how people exercise?

It's no secret that it can be hard to find motivation during the darker winter months, as the shorter days, longer nights and colder temperatures make curling up on the sofa all the more tempting. Our research shows that just under half (48%) of all people exercise during the sunny summer months, when spending time outside seems very appealing, but this quickly tails off to just over a third (36%) of people in autumn, and just 30% of people in winter.

However, when we break these statistics down further, it's clear that the percentage of people working out fluctuates much less throughout the year, than those playing sports or going walking, due to seasonal effects. 39% of people work out in the summer months, dipping to a low of 33% during the winter, a variation of 6% throughout the year – however, the percentage of those going on walks falls from 67% to 45% (a 22% decrease) from summer to winter, with a slightly larger 25% decrease for people playing sports.

## How do life events affect how regularly people exercise?

It's not just seasonal changes that impact our exercise routines. Many life events such as birthdays, weddings, and new jobs can impact our schedules, as well as our motivation, making it easier or harder to commit to working out.

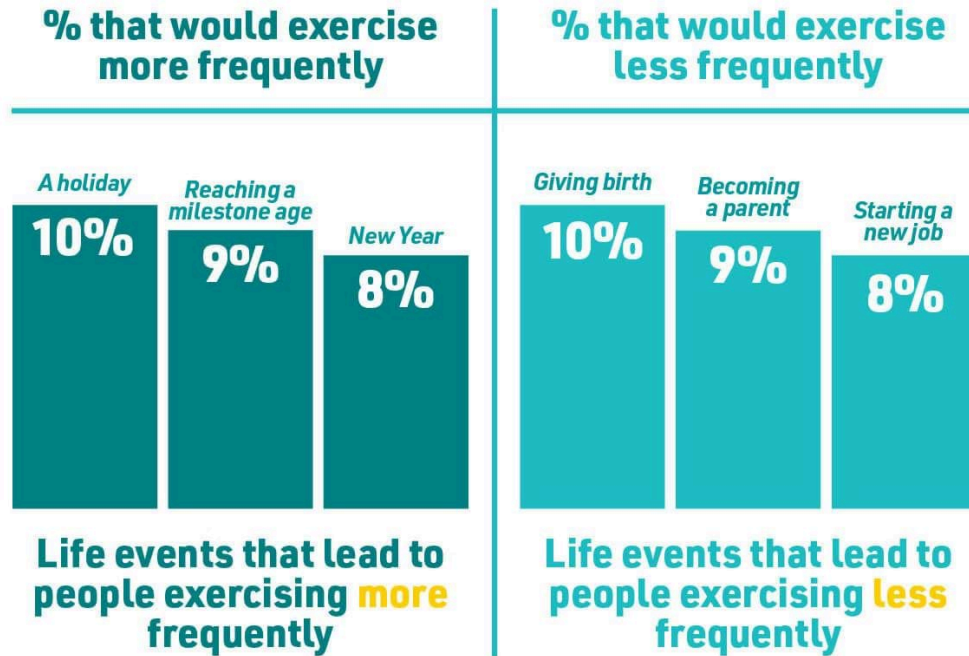
When asked if any life events led to a long-term increase in exercise, holidays (10%), reaching a milestone age (9%) and the New Year (8%) were most cited. These events are also the three that people say made them start exercising regularly for the first time. Part of this could be simply due to having a specific and timely goal, which we know helps with consistency. Both reaching a milestone age and the New Year are often seen as points for reflection and goal setting for the year or years ahead, which may be why they have such an impact when it comes to people reassessing their relationship with exercise.

As many people will know, some life events can have a negative impact on our exercise routines. Many events come with significant changes to our routines, health and lifestyle that mean that working out in the same way, or as often, isn't as possible anymore. Giving birth (10%) and becoming a parent (9%) are among the life events that prevent people from exercising regularly, with starting a new job (8%) and moving house also cited (7%).

# Which Life Events Impact Exercise the Most?



How does the lead up to major life events affect how much, or how little, we tend to exercise?



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

## 2025/26 gym usage

### Key Findings:

- 19% of people in the UK are currently a member of a gym (+2% from last year)
- 42% of those who work out are members of a gym
- A third of 25-to-34-year-olds are gym members, making them the biggest gym-goers of any age group
- Of those who work out, 44% say they work out on their own, with no memberships or subscriptions
- 17% of people are considering joining a gym in the next 12 months
- 44% of people have visited a gym using a discount offer

We've looked at how often people exercise, and how long they're exercising for, as well as which life events could cause these exercise routines to change, but



as a gym we also wanted to dive into how, when, and who is using the gym specifically.

According to data from YouGov, just under 1 in 5 (19%) of people are currently members of a gym. Comparing this to the current population of the UK, this means that around 13.2 million people are currently members, an increase of around 1.4 million versus the end of 2024, when around 17% of the UK population were gym members.

A further 17% of the population are also planning to join a gym in the coming months, which has remained on par with last year. Looking at the groups who intend to become gym members, 18-to-24-year-olds and 25-to-34-year-olds stand on top, with 3 in 10 people in each age group planning to sign up for a membership. As in 2024, men are slightly more likely to be considering gym memberships than women, with 19% doing so versus 15% of their female counterparts, with a higher percentage of men (21% versus 17% of women) already signed up.

Encouragingly, more than a quarter (27%) of parents say they plan to become gym members in the next 12 months, a whole 13% ahead of those who are non-parents, where 14% say they're considering it. When looking at the percentage of parents versus non-parents who are already gym members, interestingly, those with children already lead the way too, with a quarter (25%) already signed up compared to 17% of their child-free counterparts.

Earlier this year, a study we ran revealed that more than a quarter (26%) of parents regularly get out of breath while playing with their kids, with more than 1 in 5 (21%) admitting to avoiding active play due to their fitness levels, so it's promising to see good intentions among parents to turn things around for 2026. Exercise is often seen as a good way to prioritise 'me time' and help parents manage the daily chaos that often comes with managing a family, while active play is also a key bonding activity that can involve the whole family.

In 2024, we saw a similar number of people considering becoming members in 2025, and although gym memberships have been boosted by 2% year-on-year, this gap between intention and actualisation of memberships means there are still potentially up to 10 million people who aren't quite confident in making the leap to sign up.

## Why do people quit the gym?

members to grow exponentially. The reason this doesn't happen is that not all gym goers stay gym members forever. Looking at the reasons behind gym cancellations can help us to remove more barriers to keep more people active.

Unfortunately, although it may not surprise many, cost is the number one factor behind gym cancellations. The cost of living in the UK has been a struggle for many people for a few years now, and unfortunately gym memberships are a luxury that may need to be cut depending on a person's financial position and priorities.

Data from YouGov shows that more than a quarter (27%) of those who cancelled their gym membership say that they did so because it was too expensive. We've taken a closer look at the perceived costs associated with exercise later on in the report, so feel free to [skip forward](#) if you're interested in finding out more. Price impacts some groups more than others, with women more likely to cite price as a reason for quitting the gym than men, and parents more sensitive to the cost than those without children.

At PureGym, we believe that everyone should be able to exercise and feel good, so we're committed to providing great gyms at affordable pricing for this reason. Our low cost, no-contract memberships and range of [membership options](#) aim to suit many needs and budgets, and we're working on reaching more cities and towns in the UK with new gyms. we aim

Other than cost, 14% of people say they no longer have time to go to the gym, while a similar number cited a change in personal circumstances.

### The top five reasons people quit the gym:

- 1 It was too expensive – 27%
- 2 I didn't have time to go anymore – 14%
- 3 My personal circumstances changed – 14%
- 4 I moved – 8%
- 5 I didn't like the experience – 8%

## How much time do people spend in the gym?

Based on our own member data, the average visit time nationwide sits at 68 minutes. This is consistent with our previous UK Fitness Reports to date, and tallies with the exercise durations seen earlier in the report when considering time to both get set up on arrival and collect any belongings before heading home.

Most gym-goers will know that the length of time it takes to complete a workout isn't always down to your own preferences, planning and efficiency. No matter how big a gym is or how much kit it has, there will likely be days when someone else is using the equipment you had planned, whether it's a machine or a certain set of weights. However, this is more common on certain days, and certain times of the day. Although most people have to work around their jobs and other commitments, adjusting your routine by even 30 minutes can sometimes make all the difference.

## The busiest and quietest times to go to the gym

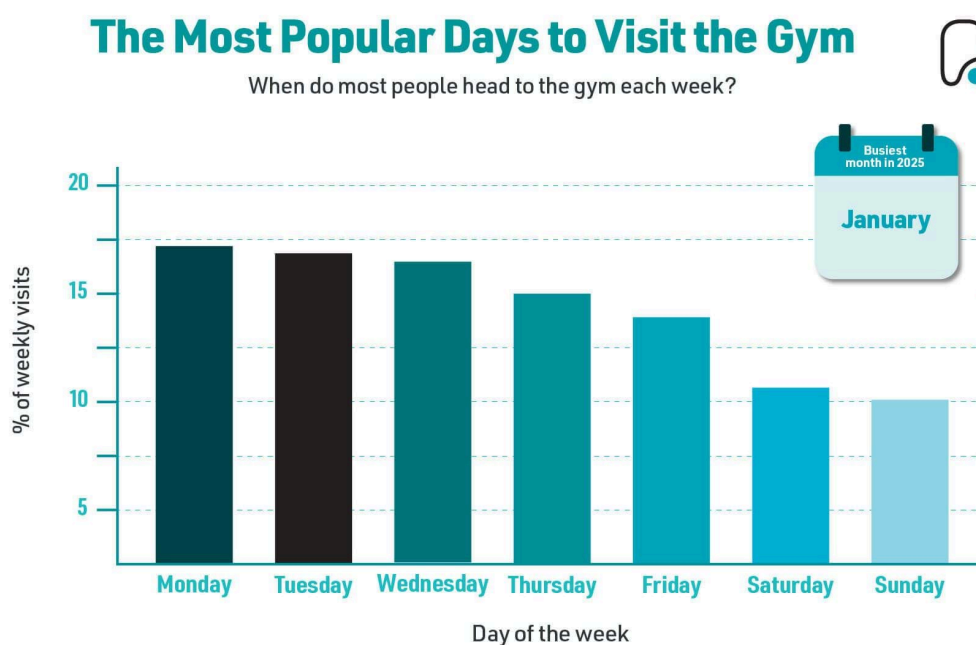
### Key Findings:

- Mondays are the busiest day of the week in the gym
- Sundays are the quietest day to visit the gym, followed by Saturdays and Fridays
- The busiest month to visit the gym is January
- The quietest month to visit the gym is December
- The quietest days at the gym are Christmas, Boxing Day and Christmas Eve followed by New Year's Day
- Classes are most popular with the 35 to 44 age group
- GLC (Glutes, Legs and Core) classes are the most popular among class attendees

Not only can a busy gym prolong the length of your workout, it can also be a barrier to people visiting a gym in the first place. Exercising in front of other people was cited as the main reason that people find the gym intimidating, so avoiding peak periods can be particularly helpful for those who struggle with gymtimidation or are new to the gym floor.

Since launching our report, Mondays and Tuesdays have consistently been the busiest days in the gym and this year is no different. As the start of the week, Monday signifies the chance of a new start, and one way to kick things off in a positive way is to get a workout under your belt to set you up for the rest of the week. From here, visits gradually decrease throughout the week, before hitting their lowest point on a Sunday. If you're new to a gym or struggle with confidence in a gym setting, making the gym a weekend habit could be a helpful way to get started as there are typically fewer people around.

If you are a PureGym member, you can also check your gym page on the [PureGym app](#) to see how busy your gym is likely to be ahead of arriving.



Most people would consider January to be the busiest month in a gym due to New Year's resolutions, and this perception is backed by data. Like the previous year, January holds the highest number of busiest days at 60%, which falls to 40% by Feb. This year, March followed as the second busiest month overall.

The run up to January is a different picture. Christmas Eve through to Boxing Day, and New Year's Day itself are the quietest overall based on data from the past 12 months, so it follows suit that December as a whole is also a quiet month.

Outside of the festive period, particularly quiet days at the gym include Mother's Day, the day before the late August bank holiday and Easter Sunday, highlighting people's preference for socialising and spending time with family during these key points of the year.

## Which gym classes are most popular?

Just under 3 in 10 (29%) gym members have attended classes in the last year, although they are particularly popular with 35-to-44-year-olds; 26% of class attendees are made up of this age group. Classes can be a great way to get started at the gym, particularly if you're unsure what you should be doing. Fitness classes are led by fully qualified instructors who will guide you through the workout and show you the correct form to use, taking away any planning or nerves about doing exercises wrong.

Classes can also be great for those who have more experience in a gym but are looking to try something new or meet new people. Many members attend the same classes on a regular basis, so if you're looking to make some friends in the gym, this could be the perfect way to do so. As we'll explore later in the report, socialising can make a huge difference to people's experience at the gym, and can help boost motivation, learning and overall wellbeing. If you'd like to jump ahead to find out more, [click here](#).

Among our members, [GLC \(Glutes, Legs and Core\)](#) takes the top spot as the most popular class this year, breaking the trend of cycling-based classes coming out on top, as it has done for the past three years of this report. [LIFT](#) follows very closely behind in second place, making up 12% of all classes attended, with [RIDE](#) following in third at 11%.

## Diet and nutrition

### Key Findings:

- 44% of people feel they have a healthy diet, with only 18% saying they don't
- 3 in 10 people admitted to not knowing what a healthy diet should look like

- Brits don't drink enough water, falling way off the mark of the recommended daily consumption of 1.5-2.5 litres with an average intake of 662ml
- 60% of people get less than their recommended five portions of fruit or veg per day
- Only 21% of people have the recommended three balanced meals per day
- Fruit is the most popular pre/post workout meal among those who work out
- 1 in 5 people feel that dietary supplements are a 'good' replacement for an unhealthy diet
- 17% of people say they'd like to take the medication 'Ozempic' based on what they've read and heard
- 1 in 5 Brits think Ozempic is a short-term solution rather than a long-term lifestyle change

The role diet and nutrition play in people's relationship to fitness is not a new or trending topic, but the conversation has been impacted by an increased focus on and hype around elements such as supplements and weight-losing drugs over the past year. With 3 in 10 people admitting they don't know what a healthy diet should look like, it is clear there is still confusion around nutrition.

Less than half (44%) of people feel they have a healthy diet, significantly fewer than 2024 and 2023 (63% and 48% respectively). Diet plays a huge role in short- and long-term health, our energy levels, sleep, and more, so we were keen to understand more about the nation's eating habits, and whether we are hitting the recommended markers to keep our bodies sufficiently fuelled and hydrated.

We also wanted to investigate attitudes around supplements and Ozempic, and the role these play in the average Brits' life, as media on this topic has risen in the last year.

## How do people feel about their diet?

Although less than half of people (44%) feel they have a healthy diet, only 1 in 5 (18%) people believe their diet is unhealthy, with 30% believing their diet to be neither healthy nor unhealthy.

Younger people between the ages of 25-34 consider themselves to have the healthiest eating habits (58%) overall, which could be a reflection of the



increased influence of wellness culture in addition to the growing accessibility to nutrition information online. Men also show more confidence in their diets than women when it comes to eating healthily (48% versus 40%).

At the other end of the scale, the 35 to 44 age group (26%) are the most likely to think they do not have a good diet. People in this age group are often parents to young children or in more senior job roles, which may leave less time for meal planning and preparation and a greater reliance on quicker, lower quality meals.

The data also highlights an interesting link between regular exercise and diet: 57% of those who exercise regularly (3+ times per week) say they feel they have a healthy diet, compared to just 25% of those who don't work out at all. Though we may all perceive what consists of a 'healthy diet' in different ways, this supports the idea that positive changes cluster together – when people focus on fitness, in turn they're more likely to make good decisions around complementary habits such as diet and sleep.

# 3 IN 10



**Aren't sure whether their diet is healthy or unhealthy**



**As many as 44% feel they do have a healthy diet and only 18% feel they don't**

Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

## **Brits are drinking less (and not enough) water**

Most people are aware of the importance of staying hydrated and the recommendation to drink 2L of water a day. Despite this, Brits fail to meet the recommended amount of 1.5 to 2.5 litres per day, with our research revealing they only drink an average of 662ml. Not only is this merely a third of the recommended amount, but also almost 100ml less than reported in 2024 (759ml).

Worryingly, it seems water consumption gradually gets worse with age. Generally, younger people drink the most water, with those aged between 16 and 24 consuming on average 814ml, the highest of all age groups. This volume decreases steadily, until it reaches a minimum among those aged 55 and over, with this age group consuming just 561ml of water per day on average. This difference in hydration could be attributed to both behavioural and physiological factors – while younger generations are more likely to be influenced by wellness trends and be more conscious of hydration as a result, older generations often experienced a [decreased sense of thirst](#).

Most people's drinking habits don't just include water. Despite having the lowest water consumption, over 55s lead the way when it comes to the volume of tea and coffee consumed per day. At an average of 470ml of these popular hot drinks consumed per day, the over 55s consume almost double the volume versus those aged 16 to 24 (244ml daily average). Again, this likely reflects wider lifestyle habits in the UK, with hot drinks remaining a staple in daily routines for the older generation, while younger people are increasingly favouring water and other cold drinks, often with wellness-boosting ingredients.

Thankfully, those who exercise regularly seem more switched on with their water consumption – gym members consume over 200ml more water than those that don't go to the gym, and those who regularly exercise drink over 300ml more than individuals who don't.

**Caitlin Coates, Personal Trainer at [PureGym Sunderland](#) and Qualified Nutritional Advisor** explains why hydration is so important for our health and fitness:

"Hydration is one of those foundations that often gets overlooked but, that underpins everything when it comes to energy, performance and recovery. When you're even slightly dehydrated, blood volume drops, which means that less oxygen and nutrients reach your muscles. The short-term effects are things like fatigue, brain fog, headaches and reduced strength or endurance. In the

long term, constantly under-drinking can impact joint health, digestion, and how efficiently your body regulates temperature – all of which make consistent training harder than it needs to be.

"A good rule of thumb is to aim for at least 2 litres of water a day as a baseline, plus an extra 500ml to 1 litre around workouts. You can also use urine colour as the simplest way to check your hydration levels: pale = good, dark = drink up."

## Brits only drink 662ml of water on average each day, half the recommended 1.5-2.5 litres



Meanwhile, Brits drink almost as much alcohol per day, as they do fizzy drinks



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

NHS guidelines suggest people should drink just one small glass (150ml) of fruit juice or smoothie each day, as they are high in sugar, but our research shows that most people far exceed this, consuming an average of around 200ml of juice and 124ml of smoothies per day. Fizzy drinks are also widely drunk, although younger age groups consume more than twice as much (378ml) daily than the nation's average (181ml).

The data shows that Brits drink alcohol almost as much per day as they do fizzy drinks. The 25-34 age group drink the most alcohol, despite recent claims that Gen Z don't drink as much as older generations. That said, a separate survey carried out by PureGym of students found that two thirds (66%) of university students care more about fitness than partying, and are more likely to drink

protein shakes, smoothies, and supplement drinks than alcohol. This suggests that relationships with alcohol are changing, with alcohol part of a wider and more balanced lifestyle.

Caitlin has also provided the following tips on how to ensure you can drink alcohol and maintain healthy fitness levels in a balanced way:

"Alcohol negatively impacts fitness performance by reducing strength, endurance, recovery, sleep quality, and muscle protein synthesis," she explains. "Even a couple of drinks can slow progress and leave you feeling flat in training."

"That said, balance matters," she adds. "It's not about 'never drinking again', it's about being intentional – keep alcohol occasional, lower-volume, and ideally away from key training or recovery days so it doesn't derail your progress."

"A healthy balance equals enjoying social occasions without letting it become a weekly habit that stalls your results. Think moderation, not elimination. If you're going to drink, hydrate more aggressively around it, keep it moderate, and avoid training the morning after a big night. The goal isn't perfection, it's balance, but if you're pushing for performance, hydration and recovery will always move the needle more than another round of cocktails."

Men also consume significantly more alcohol than women, drinking more than three times as much beer or wine on a daily basis as their female counterparts. Interestingly, regular gym-goers generally drink more alcohol than those who do not, especially when it comes to spirits – however, Caitlin explains that spirits aren't "better" than wine or beer, "they're just more concentrated".

In terms of protein shakes, the younger crowd turns to this significantly more than any other age group – people aged between 24 and 34 consume almost 10 times as many ml daily as the 55 and over age group. Protein shakes are also the second most-preferred pre/post workout snack with more than 1 in 5 using it to power their workouts.

## Are we eating well enough?

The concept of eating a balanced diet full of fruit, vegetables, protein, vitamins, fibre and minerals, is one that is instilled in us from a young age. From

childhood, we are taught that we should eat at least five portions of fruit and veg every day, and that variation is the key to a balanced diet. Although Brits are eating slightly more fruit and vegetables this year compared to last (3.83 portions up from 3.69), most of us are still not eating the recommended amount; as many as 63% of people eat less than five portions a day.

Thankfully, only as little as 4% admit to not eating any fruit or veg on a daily basis, however nearly a third of Brits are only consuming one to two portions of fruit and veg per day – which according to **Caitlin**, is definitely something that needs to change:

"It's a bit of a concern that over a quarter of people are only getting one to two portions of fruit or vegetables per day. For anyone active, whether training for performance, strength or body composition; fruit and veg aren't just "nice to have." They provide the vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support recovery, reduce inflammation, and keep your immune system firing."

The younger generation leads the way with fruit and vegetable consumption, consuming an average of 4.38 portions of fruit and veg per day. Unsurprisingly, gym members tend to consume more fruit and veg per day than those that don't go to the gym (4.31 portions versus 3.40 portions), again suggesting there is bigger awareness and consciousness of the benefits of eating healthy as part of staying fit. In fact, fruit is the most popular pre/post workout meal among those who work out with a quarter (25%) saying this is their go-to snack.

Despite general knowledge surrounding the importance and benefit of eating fruit and vegetables as part of a healthy diet, it's clear that as a nation we still have some way to go before we're hitting the mark.

As well as consuming enough fruit and vegetables, and appropriate amounts from each food group, the quantity and frequency of meals is also an important part of having a balanced diet. As it turns out, Brits aren't quite up to scratch on this front either, with the nation consuming two meals per day on average, rather than the recommended three. Gym goers and those who regularly exercise eat a higher number of balanced meals per day than those who aren't regular gym-attendees or exercisers, possibly due to increased awareness of healthy habits among this demographic.

For those who are exercising regularly, **Caitlin** explains that consuming too few meals could have consequences:



"If you're only managing one or two meals a day, chances are you're under-fuelling and that can mean sluggish training sessions, slower recovery, poor sleep and inconsistent mood or focus. Even if time's tight, you can bridge the gap with smart, quick options: smoothies with oats and protein, prepped rice bowls, Greek yogurt with fruit, or even a quality shake. The goal isn't eating more for the sake of it, it's about fuelling your body properly so you can train hard, think clearly, and perform well in (and out of) the gym."

Concerningly, just over a quarter (27%), are only consuming one balanced meal each day. Though busy lifestyles that lead to an increased reliance in snack and 'on the go' foods could be partly to play, research from [FoodCycle](#) in early 2025 highlighted how the ongoing cost of living is resulting in almost 7.2 million households struggling to afford healthy meals. With the research showing that the poorest 20% of households would need to spend 50% of their disposable income to meet these government-recommended healthy eating guidelines, it is evident that good nutrition is something that many can't afford, despite their best intentions.

## What role do supplements play in our diet?

There has long been conversation and debate around supplements and the role they play in people's diets, and in the UK alone, the supplement industry is estimated at £3.75b.

It is clear from our research that supplement intake is common across the nation with more than a third (32%) of people using them to aid their performance when training, especially among those aged 35 to 44 and among men.

However, it is worrying to discover that 14% of people believe that you can take as many supplements as you want to, while 1 in 5 (20%) feel that supplements are a "good" replacement for an unhealthy diet. Vitamins and supplements can be useful, for example to supplement Vitamin D during the winter months, they do not have the same long term health benefits as eating a healthy and balanced diet. **Phil Carpenter, Personal Trainer and Assistant Manager at [PureGym Portsmouth North Harbour](#)** explains:

"Supplements can definitely support a healthy lifestyle, but they will never substitute it, so it's worrying to see that so many people think supplements are a good replacement for an unhealthy diet. Whole foods provide us with a complex



mix of nutrients, fibre and natural compounds that work together in a way that supplements can't replicate. For example, eating fruit gives you vitamin C, but also antioxidants, water, and fibre that aid digestion and immunity – which are additional benefits that a supplement tablet alone doesn't have.

"Heavy reliance on supplements can also have drawbacks. For some minerals and vitamins, taking too much can cause side effects or even harm, such as vitamin A which can damage the liver, which people are at risk of if they don't seek medical advice on what dosage may be appropriate for them.

"For most healthy adults, taking standard multivitamins or low dose supplements is generally safe, especially when used to complement a balanced diet, not replace it. Some supplements can also interfere with medication, which is why it's recommended to consult a qualified professional before taking anything new, which is also the case for anyone who's pregnant or has underlying health conditions.

"As suggested by these survey results, supplements may also create a false sense of health security, encouraging people to neglect balanced meals, hydration, and exercise."

In addition to this, supplements are regulated under food law rather than medicine, which means manufacturers are not required to prove their effectiveness. Prioritising a healthy and balanced diet, and speaking with of a medical professional about supplementation, is the best approach.

## How do we feel about Ozempic?

## What are People's Thoughts on the Role of Ozempic in Fitness?



Over the past 12 months, the introduction of weight loss jabs has taken the health scene by storm, sparking debate and discourse on both obesity and public health. Once known as exclusive "celebrity weight loss drugs", despite being developed to help with diabetes, drugs like Ozempic and Mounjaro are now widely available and touted as a health aid for tackling obesity worldwide.

The introduction of weight loss jabs is likely to have ramifications beyond health. In May 2025, [economists said in a Times article](#) that the economic consequences of weight-loss drugs in the 21st century could be similar to those seen following the discovery of penicillin in 20th century, and so far we have seen changes such as restaurants [adjusting their portion sizes](#) to accommodate people currently taking Ozempic, and airlines [predicting they can increase their passenger capacity](#) due to a generally lighter weight of those on board.

As with all medicines, these drugs are not without their risks. Each jab comes with their own list of potential side effects, and there are concerns that the increased availability of weight loss drugs may increase risk of eating disorders and the worsening of attitudes towards fat people. Because weight loss jabs work by causing a reduction in appetite, it can also remove the need for people to prioritise a healthy diet. While there's no doubt that they can benefit many, the goal of any weight loss method should always be to improve the health of an individual, whether that's through calorie counting or Ozempic.

With the rising usage of Ozempic and other weight loss jabs, we were keen to explore how they are changing our relationship with fitness, and what are attitudes are towards these types of drugs as a whole.

The results of our survey show that attitudes towards Ozempic are currently mixed. The most common view among Brits (20%) is that Ozempic is a short-term solution rather than a long-term lifestyle change, a sentiment which is particularly felt by 16-to-24-years-old (23%), women (23% versus 16% of men), and gym-goers, or those who exercise frequently. Many people also think that Ozempic has been promoted too quickly without enough long-term research (19%) while 18% think that it should remain as a prescription-only medication. This is positive to see, as it suggests people do not take the use of Ozempic lightly, instead believing it is useful as part of a health journey rather than a standalone fix.

There are also many positive views, with 11% believing that Ozempic is an effective way to lose weight and is a positive development in the world of health to tackle obesity (10%).

When it comes to personal use, those aged 25 to 34 show the most interest; 16% say they would be willing to try weight loss jabs, with slightly more women open to trying them than men (10% versus 9%). Those who attend the gym would also be more willing to try Ozempic than their non-gym going counterparts (12% versus 7%). This could be reflective of a desire to improve aesthetics, which can be a common goal among gym goers, or of the attitudes of a group that are already more interested in health experimentation and optimisation.

Despite the media buzz around the drugs, our survey revealed that very few people (4%) have actually tried Ozempic or other weight loss drugs, suggesting that uptake remains relatively low – for now. As uptake is only likely to increase over the coming weeks, months and years, we'll continue to track how our attitudes change, and how they alter our relationship with food, fitness and self-perception in future iterations of the UK Fitness Report too.

To find out a little more about the effect of weight loss jab on our attitudes to exercise, we spoke to **Olga Dai, a Personal Trainer at [PureGym Staines](#)** who also works as a Marketing Director in pharmaceuticals, specialising in cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes.

"The most common view among Brits that Ozempic and other weight loss jabs are a short-term fix is a realistic one, and with younger people and gym-goers likely a little better informed on the topic than the wider population, it's good to see that they agree with this sentiment. Conversations in the gym are very much

centred around these medications and the risks and benefits, but so far, it seems like most people are confident that they can work hard and succeed in their goals without needing to use them.

"Unfortunately, these medications are becoming very prominent in the media, and often promoted as a lifestyle decision, as a result of celebrities using them to lose weight. With the transformations of people who have used these prescriptions so visible, it's only going to encourage people to want to try it themselves.

"However, the reality is that many people taking these medications don't change their wider lifestyle habits. Even my clients who have taken an interest in exercising and improving their diet to make their weight loss sustainable long term, by losing any additional body fat, as well as tone and build muscle mass, have started gaining weight back as soon as they've stopped the medication – which tallies with [recent news reports](#).

"Weight loss medications can be effective, but it's important that they're used by those who truly need it, and that they're fully informed of all the risks involved. Ultimately, there's no need for 'healthy' individuals to take these medications, they're better left for those with health conditions where there's an immediate risk."

## The cost of exercise

### Key Findings:

- Approximately a third of people have increased their spending on keeping fit (32%)
- Joining the gym (28%) is the biggest reason for people increasing their spend on fitness this year
- Women have invested more in home workout equipment (22% versus 17%), 1-2-1 coaching or personal training (11% versus 9%) than men, but men invest more on fitness overall
- However, 44% say they've decreased their spending on exercise because they can no longer afford it, with 23% preferring to spend their money elsewhere
- Many people think that services, kit and equipment cost more than they are available for in reality

Looking after our health and staying fit often comes with a higher investment than just time and effort. Although you don't need to spend money to work out, some activities can require paying for equipment, appropriate clothing, or service and memberships. In previous versions of the UK Fitness Report, we looked at how the cost of living crisis has impacted our relationship with fitness, and with many people across the country still feeling the pinch, we wanted to take another look at whether this has changed in the past 12 months.

Similarly to last year, many people seem unwilling to compromise on their health and the money they put towards it, with a third of Brits actually increasing their spending on keeping fit this year. But let's dig deeper into what has driven people to invest more in fitness, compared to what causes people to spend less, but also what our perception of the cost of fitness really is.

## **Why are people increasing their spending on fitness?**

**32 % of people have increased their spending on exercise in the last year**



**25-34 year olds were the most likely to say they've increased their gym spending**

The key reasons fitness-focused spending has increased

	Reason	% that have increased spending
1	Joined a gym	28%
2	Invested more in fitness clothing	27%
3	Invested more in home workout equipment	19%
4	Fitness has become a greater passion in the last year	19%
5	Started a new fitness-focused subscription (e.g. app/online workout plan)	16%

Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

The main reason behind increased spending this year is from people joining the gym (28%). This is a really positive development and a significant 8% leap from last year’s findings (20% in 2024).

Men have increased their spending on fitness more than women have in the past year – with more than a third (34%) of men spending money on exercise compared to just under 3 in 10 (29%) women. Men also invest more in their fitness than women overall and are more likely to spend increased income on fitness (16% compared to 12%). They are also more likely to join a higher-priced gym (18 versus 11%).



While spending less overall, women appear to be investing more strategically in personalised or lifestyle-based approaches to exercise. They are more likely than men to have invested in home workout equipment (22% versus 17%) and in 1-2-1 coaching or personal training (11% versus 9%), suggesting a preference for flexible yet guided training.

## What causes people to spend less on fitness?

Though almost a third (32%) of Brits say they've increased their spending on fitness over the past year, another 13% say their spending has decreased. Fitness related spending is being trimmed the most by 45-to-54-years-old, with more than half (51%) of those who have decreased their spending saying that they were no longer able to afford it. Among the younger crowd, the decrease in spending stems primarily from the realisation they don't enjoy exercising anymore, with more than a fifth (22%) of 16-to-24-year-olds saying so – more than any other age group.

### The main reasons people decrease their spending on fitness:

- 1 No longer being able to afford it – 44%
- 2 Rather spending the money elsewhere – 23%
- 3 A physical health condition that stops them from exercising – 15%
- 4 Moving to a cheaper alternative – 9%
- 5 Not enjoying exercise anymore – 9%
- 6 Not making enough use of the spending – 7%

## How much do we think fitness costs?

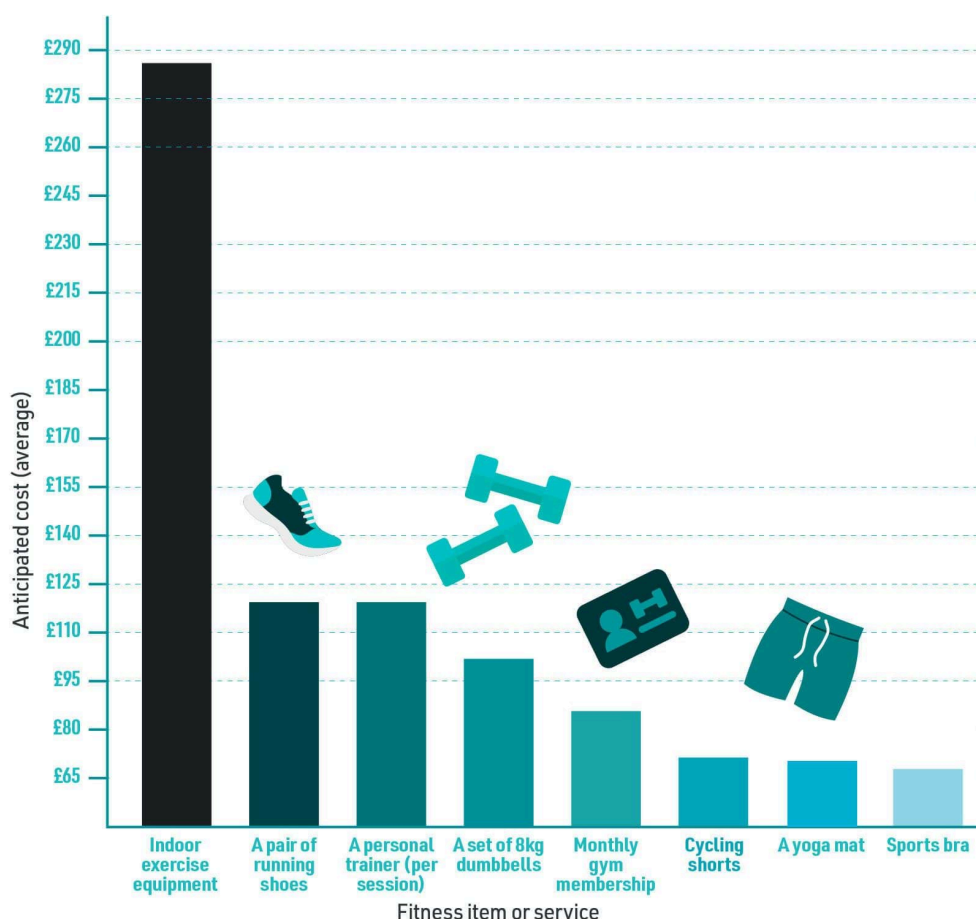
With many influencers boasting enormous workout wardrobes full of top-end trainers or attending boutique fitness classes, and the lines between fashion and sportswear continuing to blur, it's easy to get the impression that staying fit requires us to spend enormous sums of money. Earlier in the [report](#), we found that one of the main reasons people feel intimidated by the gym is because they feel they don't have the "right" type of clothing to wear to the gym (42%), but the truth is, you can get stuck into fitness without spending very much at all.

All you really need to get moving is, well, yourself! The internet and social media are teeming with free workout material, and we've got plenty of our own both in our [online workout library](#) or on the [PureGym app](#), which allows you to exercise in your own home at no extra cost. If you're regularly taking part in a sport where specific kit is recommended, such as gait-appropriate running trainers, it can be worthwhile to invest a little – but even then, there are usually options for different budgets.

## How Expensive do People Think Fitness Items are?



From yoga mats to personal trainers – we asked people how much they think exercise kit and services cost on average.



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

To get a feel for people's perception of the costs associated with staying fit, we asked Brits to price a range of different fitness items and services, from gym memberships to dumbbells. Indoor exercise equipment, such as an indoor bike, a treadmill, or a walking pad, was perceived to be the highest-investment items, with an estimated cost of £288. Although higher quality equipment will come

with a higher price tag, it is possible to get fully functioning walking pads for less than a third of that price. The same goes for a pair of running shoes – most people anticipating spending £117 on a new pair, but you can easily find entry-level trainers on the high street for half that price. With all fitness equipment, you can start by investing small, and if you find it becomes a passion of yours, you could perhaps justify investing more into your gear.

Most people also believe that a gym membership costs around £85 per month, when in reality it could be as little as £30 a month at gyms such as PureGym. Taking advantage of promotions and off-peak membership options can reduce this even further, which we already know from [earlier in the report](#), many people take advantage of.

## Fitness and technology

### Key Findings:

- Among those who monitor their fitness, the majority use their phone (61%), followed by smart watches (42%) and heart rate monitors (35%)
- Among the benefits of monitoring health data with a smart device are more awareness of own health (39%), general mood uplift (25%) and being more driven to achieve goals (27%)
- A third (33%) of people use AI tools to aide their fitness, a leap from last year
- The majority of people who use AI as a fitness aid turn to it for tips on nutrition or meal planning advice (41%)
- YouTube stays strong as a source of inspiration with 56% of people using it to support their fitness routines
- More than a third (36%) of women track their menstrual cycle (-1% from last year)

We live in a world where it's easier than ever to monitor every aspect of our lives, using technology and wearable devices. There's an app for everything, from counting your calorie burn to creating bespoke marathon plans, and although this comes with obvious benefits, there are also some potential down sides of this 'always on' approach.

## How do people use technology to monitor their health, and how do they feel about it?

Our research suggests that as many as two thirds of people (61%) use their smartphones to monitor their fitness, with smart watches and heart rate monitors also very popular with 42% and 35% using these devices respectively. Smartphones and watches can track a whole host of different metrics, from step counts to calorie burn tracking or recording sleep duration and quality, so it's no surprise they come up top. Just 3% of people use an Oura Ring; newer tracking tech like the Oura often come with a high price point, which is likely why they have significantly less uptake.

In terms of the apps that people are using to aid their workouts, Strava is revealed among the most popular, with 17% of all those surveyed – both those who work out regularly and those who don't – saying they use it multiple times per week. Peloton (13%), Strong (15%), Runna (15%) and other workout apps (14%) also see similar levels of popularity, highlighting how there's an app and approach for everyone, regardless of your personal fitness goals.

Once again, YouTube stays strong as a source of fitness inspiration, with a further 6% of people saying they use it regularly compared to 2024 (56% versus 50%). Unsurprisingly, traditional media sources are continuing to decline in popularity, with newspapers seeing a 4% decrease year-on-year, with a similar 6% decrease seen for printed fitness magazines.

TikTok and Instagram both continue to see moderate growth. TikTok experienced a 5% increase in popularity over the last 12 months (from 35% usage in 2024 to 40% in 2025), with Instagram seeing a 4% increase in the same period (38% to 42%).

But what is the impact of these devices and apps on our wellbeing? Encouragingly, the main changes people notice when monitoring their health and fitness are largely positive. Most people report an increased awareness of their own health and fitness (39%), with an uplift in mood (25%), better health (28%), being more driven to achieve goals (27%), and feeling better equipped to make decisions about their health and fitness (22%) all listed as other outcomes from monitoring.

## The main changes people notice when monitoring their personal health with a smart device:

- 1 Increased awareness of health/fitness – 39%
- 2 Improvements to general health – 28%
- 3 Greater motivation to reach fitness goals – 27%
- 4 Improved mood – 25%
- 5 Feeling better equipped to make decisions about health and fitness – 21%

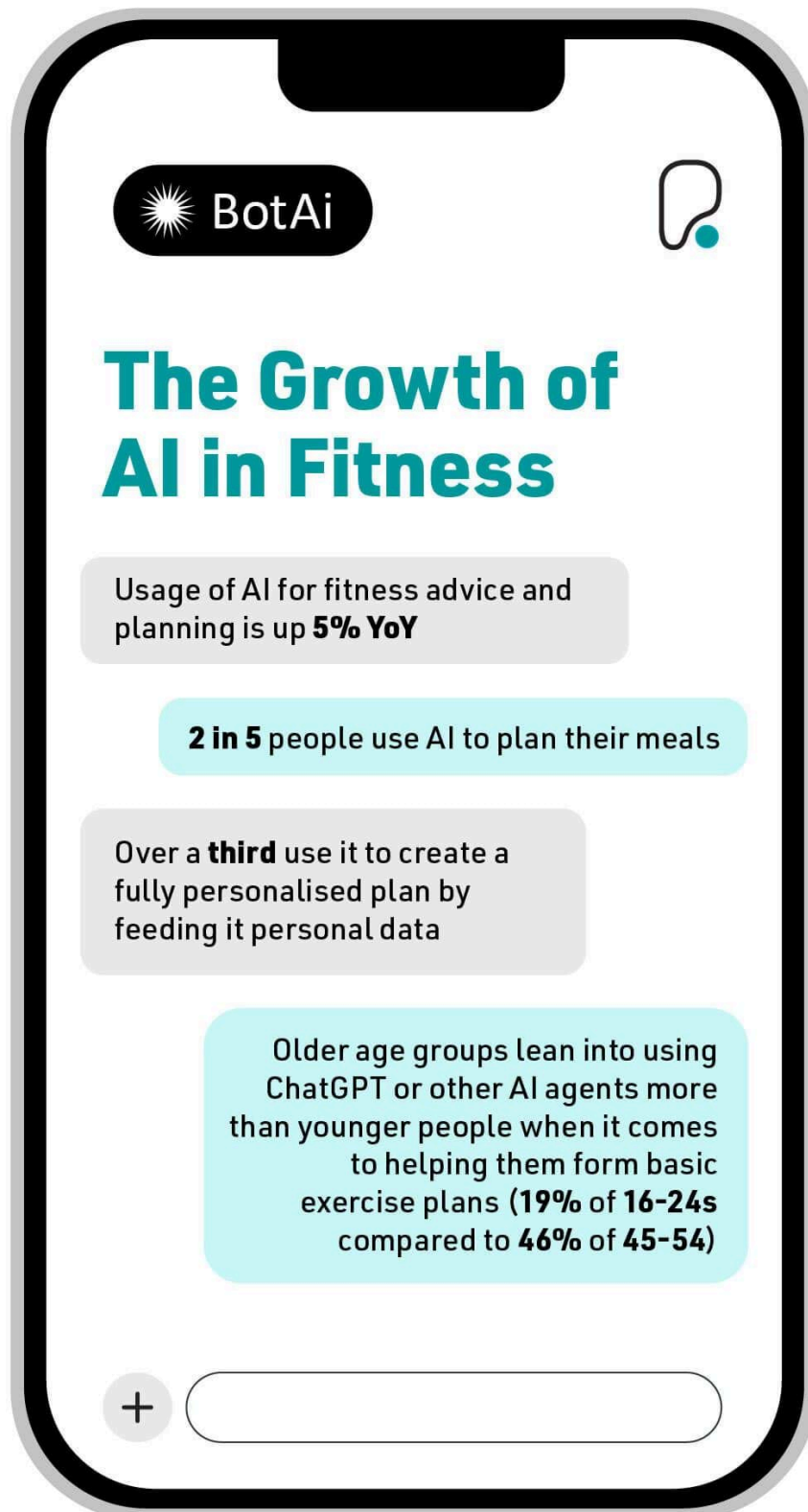
This always-on approach does come with some negatives, too. Almost 1 in 5 (18%) people report feeling guilty about not meeting a goal they've set on a device, with some feeling anxious when they don't meet the goals they've set. Men report a higher percentage of being negatively impacted by these devices than women (7% versus 5%), but at the same time, they state how using these devices has helped them achieve new records or PBs to a larger degree than their female counterparts (25% versus 17%).

With this data anxiety likely to become more common as more people adopt the use of wearables and tracking apps, **Personal Trainer Jessica Collins from [PureGym Tunbridge Wells](#)** explains that getting a second opinion could help to relieve this additional stress, and that even professionals can find this data a little too much at times:

"When it comes to hitting goals that have been set by a watch or other device, I think it's important to consult someone's second opinion, whether that be a personal trainer or health professional. These devices are brilliant, but don't necessarily take into account everything about you, such as your lifestyle, work schedules and family life, so it can be difficult to give you exact goals and targets to be hitting.

"There can be vast amount of data available to us via this tech, some of which can feel incredibly overwhelming, as we may not understand the metrics properly. I personally use both my phone and a fitness watch to track my workouts and metrics. However, I have also felt overwhelmed at times at just how much information is available at my fingertips – so it's something that people working in the industry are also trying to deal with!"

## The rise of AI in fitness



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025



The speed at which people have integrated AI into their daily lives has accelerated immensely in the last year. A [New York Times article](#) from June 2025 discussed the widespread adaptation of AIs, such as ChatGPT in people's lives, comparing its introduction to that of smart phones and how it's gone from "doesn't exist" to "basically can't function without it" in record time. It's no surprise then, to see an increase in the people using it as a source of advice and inspiration for their fitness – with our research finding that a further 6% of people are using the tech compared to last year (33% versus 27%).

In light of that, we were keen to take a closer look at how people are using AI as part of their daily fitness routine. Through our research, we found that the most popular use of AI is for nutrition or meal planning advice, with 2 in 5 (41%) of those who frequently use AI for health and fitness related queries using it for this purpose. According to **Phil Carpenter, Personal Trainer and Assistant Gym Manager at [PureGym Portsmouth North Harbour](#)**, AI can be helpful when used for this purpose, but should still be treated with care:

"When it comes to food, AI can help people to explore new recipes, get a better understanding of portion balance, and organise their nutrition and food over their meals. For someone who may struggle with consistency and creativity in the kitchen, these things could be great for making healthy eating more achievable and less time consuming, making it more likely for them to achieve their goals. Similarly, it can also remove a lot of the guesswork, making it feel easier for people who are just starting to focus more on their nutrition."

AI serves multiple purposes for the 33% of people who use it; in addition to using AI for nutrition and meal planning, 38% of these also said that they use it for basic exercise plans, while just over a third (36%) use it to help them learn new exercises or proper technique (36%). As not everyone may have access to a personal trainer to help provide form cues for different moves, **Phil** thinks that "using AI to learn new exercises can be a helpful resource, as it offers convenient, on-demand guidance and can introduce people to a variety of movements they might not otherwise try."

However, he cautions: "While it can offer form tips, AI cannot provide real-time feedback or correct mistakes as they happen, which increases the risk of developing bad habits or even injury. People should be wary of relying solely on AI or online tutorials without ensuring they fully understand the movement and how it feels in their own body. It is important to start slowly, focus on controlled

movements, and if possible, get a professional to check your form, even if only occasionally.

"Also, not all AI-generated content is created equally, so if you're using it for form tips or any other fitness-related guidance, try and cross-reference your information with other reputable sources – this is the key to ensure you stay safe and effective if using AI in your training."

On top of those using AI for basic guidance, 37% take things a step further by feeding it data, metrics and performance stats to create a fully bespoke fitness plan. Though these plans are likely to better reflect your health and lifestyle, **Phil** still recommends getting these double checked by a professional: "Even if you have given your AI tool plenty of personal information such as your age, weight, activity level, and goals, AI-generated meal or workout plans should still be treated as a starting point and not a personalised prescription."

"Even if you believe a plan to be robust, it is always best to cross-check any AI plan with a qualified nutritionist, dietitian, personal trainer and in some medical cases your GP, especially if you have specific dietary needs or medical concerns."

Though the younger generations may be leading the way with AI adoption, the way in which AI is used does differ between age groups. Among those who often use AI for health and fitness support, 45-to-54-year-olds are most likely to use it for creating basic exercise plans (46% versus 19% of 16-to-24-year-olds), while those aged 25-to-34-years old are most likely to use it to understand fitness concepts or training science (42%).

When it comes to utilising AI, there are also gender-differences with how the tech is used, with 40% of women who often use AI for fitness purposes doing so to learn new exercises or improve their technique compared to 32% of men. Women who get support from AI for their health and fitness also over-index compared to men when using it for motivation or accountability reminders, with 41% using it for this compared to 31% of men. However, men do favour using the tech for creating fully personalised plans by feeding it data, with 8% more doing so than women.

## How tracking menstrual cycles and cycle syncing impacts fitness performance

## What Impact Does Cycle Syncing Have on our Workouts?



58% of women that track their menstrual cycle using an app, will sync their workout regimes with their cycle



The **positive** impacts experienced by women that sync their workouts with their cycle

5% of women said they noticed no impact



The **negative** impacts experienced by women that sync their workouts with their cycle

Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

Technology has given women a greater ability to track their menstrual cycles over the past decade, so it's interesting to see that there's been a decline in the number of women who actively track their periods over recent years. When we ran our [first study on the topic of menstrual health](#) back in 2022, we found that as many as 47% of women were tracking their menstrual cycle. However, this number has dropped by more than 10% over the last three years, with just over a third (36%) of women now saying that they do so. Younger women are much more likely to track their cycle, with almost three quarters (71%) of 16-to-24-year-olds and 72% of 25-to-34-year-olds doing so. By comparison, only 26% of those aged 45 to 54 do, however, this age group is also statistically less likely to still experience periods.

For those who *do* actively track their cycles, we wanted to find out how this data was being used, if at all, to aid exercise. Nearly 3 in 5 (58%) women who track their menstrual cycle using an app still sync their workout regimes with their cycle according to our research, though again, this is a drop of 10% from last year's findings. Once more, those aged 25 to 34 are the biggest embracers, with as many as 65% of women in this age group citing they fit their workouts around their cycle. As many as 16% of 16-to-24-year-olds state they don't intentionally tailor their workouts around their cycle but are sometimes forced to adjust or cancel their workouts due to where they are in their cycle.

Looking at the impact of cycle tracking more widely, women generally report benefits such as helping them manage menstrual symptoms (32%), improving their overall mood (31%), exercising more consistently (30%) and feeling better about their workouts.

## Inside the industry: Personal Trainers

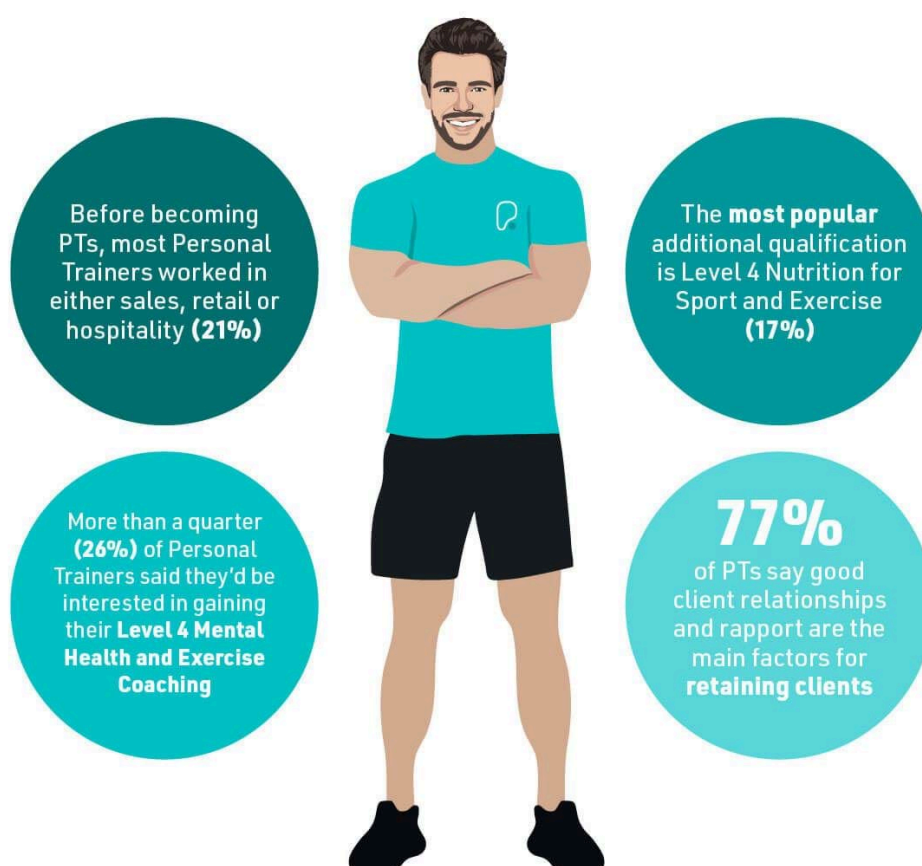
### Key Findings:

- Before becoming PTs, 1 in 5 (21%) worked in either sales, retail or hospitality -- the highest of any sector
- Just under a quarter (24%) of respondents say they'd been working as a PT for 1-2 years, the highest of any timeframe, followed closely by 5-6 years (23%) with just 7% of PTs working in the industry for more than 10 years
- Level 4 for Sport and Exercise (17%) is the most popular additional qualification among PTs, followed by Level 4 Strength and Conditioning and Level 3 Pre- and Post-Natal Exercise (both 15%)
- More than three quarters (77%) of PTs cited client relationship and rapport as the main factor for retaining clients, while 67% put it down to seeing results/progress over time
- 83% of PTs say that they view personal training as part of the UK's preventative healthcare system
- More than half (52%) of PTs say they'd never received a GP referral request

With recent studies finding that [a third of Brits are considering a career change](#), with flexibility one of primary reasons for doing so, we wanted to find out a little

more about the life of a personal trainer through the eyes of our own in-house PTs. What encouraged people to pursue a career as a PT? What job did they pivot from? Which skills and qualifications do PTs want to specialise in or enhance? With tools like AI and social media platforms making it easier than ever for people to learn about fitness, and weight loss jobs changing the fitness landscape, we also wanted to find out about the changing nature of a PT's role and how they view this in the wider context of public health.

## The Life of a Personal Trainer



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

## The career trajectory of personal trainers

A career in personal training is more than just creating workouts. It's about helping others achieve their fitness goals, to improve their wellbeing, and become better versions of themselves. Last year, [more than 20,000 new fitness](#)



[professionals qualified in the UK](#), so we wanted to learn more about what motivates people to pursue this profession.

When asked this question, most of our PT panel say they were inspired to join the fitness industry through a mix of passion, personal experience, and a desire to help others. Many referenced their own fitness journeys, from weight loss transformations to improved mental health, as key motivators, wanting to share those benefits with others. A large number highlighted a deep love for exercise, sport, and the gym environment, as well as the satisfaction that comes from empowering clients to feel stronger, healthier, and more confident. Others were motivated by personal or family health experiences, career changes, or the appeal of flexibility and independence that comes with personal training. For some, the role also offered a meaningful way to combine purpose with passion, turning something they love into a rewarding career that genuinely changes lives.

Not every PT has been involved in the industry since school, and one of the benefits of the profession is that it's something you can move into at any point. Of the PTs surveyed, the sales, retail or hospitality sector was the most common starting point (21%), with 12% having worked in corporate office roles before switching a laptop and desk for their trainers and weights. Interestingly, only 2% of PTs had previously worked in education – though, if you are already an educator, this could still be an advantage!

PureGym is the perfect place to kick-start your career as a PT, thanks to our [Personal Training Academy](#), and many of the trainers here are relatively early on in their journey having completed their qualifications with us. Just under a quarter (24%) of PT respondents say they'd been working as a PT for 1-2 years, followed by just under a quarter who have been in the industry for 5-6 years (23%). Just 7% of PTs surveyed say that they have been working in the industry for 10+ years.

The career trajectory of a personal trainer is a dynamic and ever evolving one, with an array of additional qualifications on offer to develop their skills to the next level. But what is the most common area for upskilling among PTs? The most popular is Level 4 Nutrition for Sport and Exercise (17%), followed by Level 4 Strength and Conditioning and Level 3 Pre- and Post-Natal Exercise, both at 15%. Interestingly, only 1 in 10 of PTs with additional qualifications have received this for Level 3 Exercise Referral (GP Referral), while just 2% have completed the Level 4.



**Hakim Harris, Cluster Manager at [PureGym Cardiff Central](#)** shares his thoughts:

"Personal trainers often look at additional qualifications or certifications primarily as a selling point to differentiate themselves from their peers, especially in such a competitive market. However, these aren't necessarily something that most clients will look for before working with a trainer, as a lot of personal training conversions are created organically on the gym-floor from conversations and visibility, and people sharing common interests or feeling relatable to the specific PT.

"However, it's important for personal trainers to make their qualifications and abilities clear to clients during the onboarding process. While personal trainers can't technically take on the role of a qualified dietician, many clients may assume they can, so by having these conversations around what your services includes early in the working relationship, this clears this up quite quickly. When it comes to diet plans and injuries specifically, clients with these needs may only appear occasionally, so if unless you're fully qualified in these areas, it's generally better to refer them on to someone who can better meet their needs."

Half of PTs say they haven't completed any additional qualifications or certifications since they first became a PT, which isn't too surprising considering many are in their first two years. We were keen to find out which areas they would like to upskill in should they have the chance. The most sought-after qualifications were Level 4 Strength and Conditioning and Level 4 Certificate in Advanced Personal Training with 37% and 35% saying they'd be keen to get these certifications. More than a quarter (26%) say they'd be interested in gaining their Level 4 Mental Health and Exercise Coaching, while 23% are keen to become L3 Exercise Referral Qualified, with 13% aiming for the L4 qualification.

## **The role of PTs for public health**

It goes without saying that a personal trainer has the power to help a client maximise their exercise efforts and reach their fitness goals. Nearly 80% of PureGym PTs say their clients have goals of losing weight, whilst 61% say clients came to them with the hope of gaining confidence.

Interestingly, more than 8 in 10 (83%) of the PTs we surveyed say they view personal training as part of the UK's wider preventative healthcare system. Just over half (55%) wanted to improve their overall health, but 7% also came to them with the aim of aiding or improving a physical health condition.

GP referrals, often called the Exercise Referral Scheme are just one example of how fitness and the wider healthcare system interact. Under the Exercise Referral Scheme, GPs are able to refer patients to qualified fitness professionals to help them manage or improve their health conditions through exercise. These referrals are generally made for those with specific health conditions or risk factors, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, or musculoskeletal pain, where regular activity can lead to significant improvements.

15% of the PTs we surveyed say they are currently working with a client who has been referred to them by a GP, with an additional 18% saying they had done so previously. What is more, over a quarter (26%) of PTs say that obesity is the most common reason clients are referred, followed by joint conditions at 13%. Pairing this with the previously mentioned insight that 13% of people are inspired to get into fitness based off a health professionals' recommendation, it's clear that PTs play a vital role in helping people improve their overall health.

Being a personal trainer can be a highly rewarding and influential profession, but it requires charisma and the ability to connect with the people you train. It is great to see that just over a fifth of Brits (21%) say they have made friends through a personal trainer, and more than three quarters (77%) of the PTs we spoke to cited client relationship and rapport as the main factor for retaining clients. Working with clients over time is crucial, and the most popular length of time for PTs to be working with clients is 7-12 months (29%) with only 7% of PTs say they work with clients for three months or less. In fact, as many as 13% say they work with clients for more than two years.

## Socialising at the gym

### Key Findings:

- 41% say having friends at the gym has made them more consistent with their fitness routine and achieving their goals
- A similar number (40%) stated it has helped them feel more motivated to go to the gym

- 39% say their gym friends have helped them improve their training or technique, or taught them new exercises
- 39% have made new friends through attending a class, while 23% did so by striking up conversations with a fellow gym-goer or by attending a social event organised by the gym, while 22% made friends through a personal trainer
- A third (33%) say they socialise with their gym friends outside of the gym and 31% say they have a solid network of friends at the gym and enjoy the sense of community
- As many as 29% now attend classes with their friends

We've already seen that the gym is the perfect place to make new friends. With numerous studies highlighting the importance of socialising for our overall wellbeing -- such as one from the [World Happiness Report](#) which shows that stronger social networks are linked with smaller declines in mental health during challenging periods -- we wanted to dig into the topic a little further, to find out exactly how these friendships have been formed, and what people view as the main benefits of having 'gym friends'.

## The Power of Socialising at the Gym



Source: Independent PureGym survey – Sept 2025

### The power of community at the gym

Though it's always nice to see a familiar friendly face when you hit the gym for a workout, it turns out that being sociable at the gym has a really positive impact on how well people do while exercising. 41% say that having friends at the gym has made them more consistent with their fitness routine and has helped them achieve their goals, with a similar number (40%) saying it has helped them feel more motivated to go to the gym. Almost as many (39%) said their gym friends have helped them improve their training or technique, or taught them new exercises, too.

Some gym-goers may be keen to make friends and build a community but are unsure of how to get started. As we mentioned [earlier in the report](#), classes can

be a great way to do this, with almost 2 in 5 (39%) of those who exercise and have made friends at the gym, doing so in this way according to our research. This isn't the only way to do so though - almost a quarter (23%) made friends by striking up a conversation on the gym floor or by attending a social event set up by the gym. The fact that you're at the gym together initially is always a great way to get a conversation started with someone new, as you instantly have something in common.

According to **Lucas Whitehead, Head of Marketing & Partnerships at Andy's Man Club**, becoming part of the gym community may be much easier than you first think: "Speaking from personal experience, I don't think an effort needs to be made to be part of a gym community, it naturally happens. Small conversations, such as people asking you how many sets you have left on a particular piece of equipment, can often lead to regular conversations with people. I think being open, friendly and accommodating is key. By attending regularly, you see the same faces and conversation naturally happens."

What starts off as a single interaction can quickly become firm friendship. A third (33%) of people say they now socialise with their gym friends beyond the gym floor and 31% say they have a solid network of friends at the gym, enjoying the sense of community. Interestingly, gym members are also more likely to make friends through exercise, than people that exercise but don't use the gym -- highlighting the importance of the gym as a third space, and one that improves not only our physical fitness, but also social wellbeing.

Generally, younger age groups feel the positive effects of socialising at the gym more than the older ones. 14% of 25-to-34-years-old cite making friends through exercise as a benefit, higher than the national average and any other age group.

Interestingly, men generally feel more motivated by having friends in the gym than women (46% versus 31%) and feel their friends have helped them improve at the gym to a larger degree (45% versus 31%). While men are more likely to form friendships by striking up conversation with fellow exercisers (29% compared to 16%), women tend to make more friends at classes (42% versus 38%). Women also exercise alongside their friends more (32% versus 27%) and are more likely to socialise with their friends outside of the gym (35% versus 32%).

# Looking ahead – fitness trends for 2026

## Key Findings:

- 'Japanese walking', a TikTok trend which has already gone viral once this year, is set to be the fastest growing fitness trend in 2026, with an astounding 2,968% in interest as we approach 2026
- 'Walking yoga', with an equally impressive 2,414% surge in searches, takes second place
- The 'plank hover', a micro-workout, completes the top three, with a 967% increase in interest
- Once again, the workouts seeing the biggest declines prove that not all trends are timeless, with 'remote personal training' (-81%), 'cozy cardio' (-76%), 'wall Pilates' (-63%) and 'soft hiking' (-58%) all seeing the biggest drops in interest

To round out yet another insightful delve into all things health and fitness, we like to analyse online search data to reveal which workouts will inspire this year's biggest workout trends.

We named 'wall Pilates' as our [top trend of 2024](#), and indeed it was; the 12 months that followed were filled with all types of Pilates, from wall to reformer, to mat and hot. 'Wall Pilates' specifically may be on the decline this year, having seen a 63% decrease in popularity since our last report, but there are no end of trends ready and waiting to take its place. This year, it feels as though we're perhaps going back to the basics, with a humble walk taking centre stage.

Before we get ahead of ourselves, here are the top workouts and fitness trends you can expect to see continue their meteoric rise throughout 2026.

## The top fitness trends for 2026

With a [study](#) this year showing that the classic 10,000 step mantra is in fact arbitrary and revealing that we can all get a significant health benefit from just 7,000 steps a day instead – walking has become trendier than ever. In fact, after an era which was full of non-stop fitness challenges, HIIT workouts and intense cult-phenomena like CrossFit and Hyrox – it feels that for many people the tide has turned. We're seeing a migration back to more accessible ways to get fit,



with low-impact movement on the rise -- evidence of which comes in the form of our two biggest trends for 2026, both of which revolve around walking.

Taking the top spot is the viral TikTok trend known as 'Japanese walking', a workout that has its roots in a [2007 study](#) which showed that alternating between fast and slow walking for improved health benefits. With Japan frequently cited among the [top nations for life expectancy](#) it's no surprise that in the quest for healthier ageing we're turning to the country to see what we can learn from them.

'Walking yoga' (+2,414%) takes the stage as the second fast growing fitness trend for 2026. A practice where you incorporate principles from yoga into a walk, the practice is said to improve cardiovascular health, muscle strength and flexibility, as well as reducing stress and anxiety and offering a sense of grounding. With 'incline walking' also making the top 20 (+50%) and walking on the whole a resurging topic of conversation among scientists and fitness enthusiasts alike, we anticipate this trend sustaining or even gaining momentum over the next 12 months.

The 'plank hover' completes the top three. While it's technically a micro workout rather than a whole trend in its own right, it's interesting to see that this variation on a classic move has seen such an enormous increase in interest over the last year. The plank hover is a dynamic version of a traditional plank, where you lower your body to just above the floor and back up again rather than holding it in a static position. The idea behind it is that rather than simply working your core muscles, you incorporate extra mobility training into your workout and intensify the stress that your muscles are under.

While 'wall Pilates' has dropped off in terms of interest since it was our top fitness trend of 2023, it's clear that Pilates itself is going nowhere. 'Nord Pilates' is 2026's fourth most popular fitness trend, with a 750% increase in searches for the app which is designed to provide personalised workouts using Pilates principles to those who can't find the time to make it to classes out of the house. Meanwhile 'hot reformer Pilates' also made it into the top 20, thanks to a 53% uptick in searches for the trendy reformer class which also integrates principles from hot yoga.

Other standout trends include the '10-20-30 Method' (+467%), an interval-based method of running training which tallies with the increased level of interest in the sport (Strava's [Year in Sport Report](#) just last year saw a 9%

increase in the number of marathons, ultramarathons and century rides being logged), 'bridal arm workouts' (+296%) showing that those planning their nuptials for next year are keen to tone up ahead of wearing sleeveless dresses, and 'Hyrox' – which despite dropping from 2nd place to 8th this year -- has shown sustained levels of interest, proving that the hybrid endurance-meets-functional event is going nowhere quickly.

Reminiscent of fitness in the early 2000's, 'vibration plates' also made it into the top 15, a retro workout that has seen a resurgence within weight loss and biohacking conversations and has already been discussed in the likes of Harper's Bazaar and Vogue. The plates are designed to trigger rapid, involuntary muscle contractions and is touted as a way to 'hack' the body's reaction to exercise, supposedly burning calories and boosting your metabolism.

### **2026 Trends, ranked by % increase in Google searches from July – Sept 24 versus July – Sept 25:**

- 1 Japanese walking - 2,968%
- 2 Walking yoga - 2,414%
- 3 Plank hover - 967%
- 4 Nord Pilates - 750%
- 5 10-20-30 method - 467%
- 6 Bridal arm workout - 296%
- 7 Virtual fitness challenges - 177%
- 8 Hyrox - 171%
- 9 Dead hang exercise - 128%
- 10 75 medium - 125%
- 11 75 hotter - 108%
- 12 Mobility flow - 90%
- 13 Online fitness program - 89%
- 14 Virtual fitness classes - 85%
- 15 Vibration plate workout - 83%
- 16 Indoor rowing - 83%

- 17 Hot reformer Pilates - 53%
- 18 Ultra marathon training plan - 50%
- 19 5k training plan - 50%
- 20 Incline walk - 50%

## Which fitness trends are on their way out?

If we've learnt anything from conducting this research multiple years in a row, it's that microtrends seem to come and go, but the core trends behind them (running, Pilates, strengthening your core, or losing weight) stay firmly put. Microtrends tend to be small variations on the core trend itself, for example using a new piece of equipment, changing up duration, intensity or even the time of day, or layering different fitness trends together to change things up and spark new motivation.

In our opinion, the more the merrier. If a new spin on an old format is what it takes to help new people enjoy a sport, or a new method enables you to hold yourself accountable to exercising at a certain time and improves your consistency – we're all for it.

For every new trend that pops up, there is a trend that had its moment in the spotlight but has since been forgotten.

The top fitness trend losing the most steam is the '4-2-1 workout', one that perhaps, given all that we know about time being one of the biggest blockers to exercise, simply asked too much of busy individuals. The idea behind it was to provide a weekly workout structure that involved four days of strength training, two days of cardio, and one day of active recovery.

Surprisingly, 'remote personal training', which was last year's top trend, has sunk down and become one of the biggest losers for 2026 – perhaps indicating how important people find it to work out in person with their PTs.

Furthermore, the '30-30-30 trend', which was in third place last year in the top trends has sunk down, the restrictions on when to exercise and when to eat seemingly too much for people to want to commit to it long term.

- 1 4-2-1 workout: -87%

- 2 Remote personal training: -81%
- 3 Cozy cardio: -76%
- 4 Wall Pilates: -63%
- 5 Soft hiking: -58%
- 6 Weighted vest workout: -56%
- 7 Twerking class: -56%
- 8 Neuro fitness: -56%
- 9 Boutique fitness: -56%
- 10 28-Day wall Pilates challenge: -56%
- 11 Functional fitness: -55%
- 12 Tarzan movement: -47%
- 13 3-2-1 workout: -46%
- 14 Pole fitness: -45%
- 15 Fitness challenge: -45%
- 16 30-30-30: -45%
- 17 Chicken-sizing: -38%
- 18 Bokwa: -38%
- 19 3-2-8 workout: -35%
- 20 Micro workout: -35%

## Ready to dive into a new year of fitness?

That's a wrap on yet another UK Fitness Report! Of course, we've seen more trends come and go, and weight loss jabs and AI continue to shake up the industry, but we hope that regardless of these new influences, the nation will continue to find new ways of fitting exercise into their routines, and endeavour to lead a healthy lifestyle.

So, let's pick up the pace for 2026. Make sure to set those goals (remember to make them measurable!) and get your workout kit ready to go, even if it's just dusting off an old pair of trainers. If you think the gym could be the way for you to reach your goals, we'd love to help you out - why not [find your nearest PureGym](#) or take a look at our range of [gym membership options](#)

## Methodology

Data was compiled for the report using the following sources:

- YouGov survey (representative of respondents in Great Britain) – compiled using data from 24/08/2025
- PureGym internal customer data and Personal Trainer data
- Google Keyword Planner (fitness trends) analysing worldwide search volume. Correct as of October 2025
  - Certain trends were omitted from the rankings if their search volumes were not representative of an increase in interest. (For example, 'puppy yoga' previously gained widespread attention for the mistreatment of animals, rather than interest from a consumer point of view, so was removed from the rankings).
- Censuswide survey - 2,000+ nationally representative respondents, conducted in September 2025

## Interested in covering the stats with this report?

If you're interested in covering any of the data included in the report, or wanted to know more about other data we may have, please send an email to [puregymreport@propellernet.co.uk](mailto:puregymreport@propellernet.co.uk) and a member of the team will get back in touch soon.

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